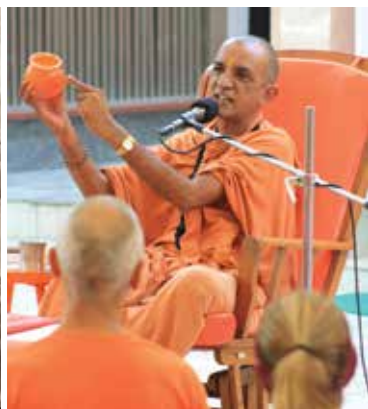
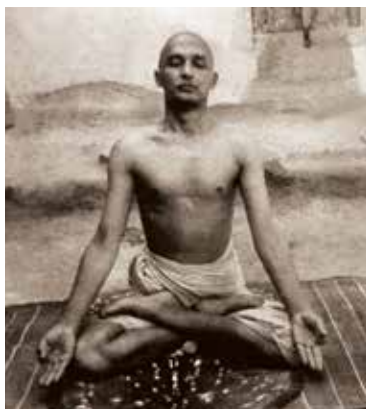


Hatha Yoga for Everyone

Overview and Practice Capsules



Hatha Yoga for Everyone

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Hatha Yoga for Everyone

Overview and Practice Capsules



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

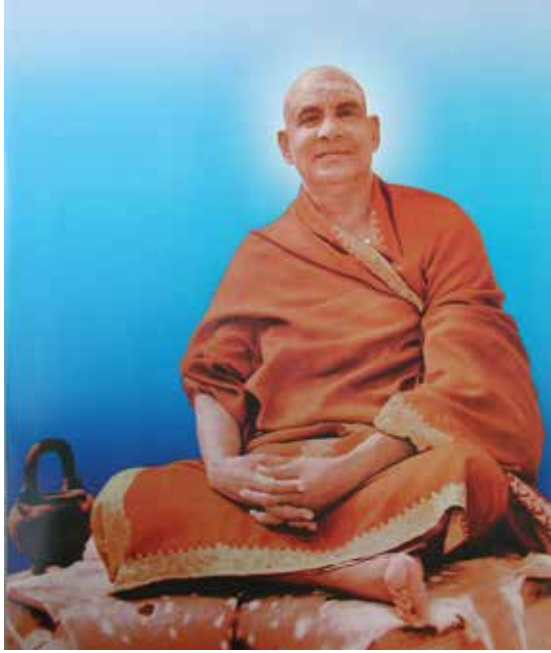
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2019

ISBN: 978-81-938918-8-9

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Preface:

The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The mandate Swami Satyananda received was to propagate the science of yoga and take yoga from “shore to shore and door to door”. In the days of Swami Sivananda, yoga was far from the globally recognized and accepted word it is today. Yoga was considered a spiritual practice reserved for sannyasins and renunciates who had renounced society and were seeking enlightenment. It was not seen as something that could be incorporated into society and practised by the general public.

When the Bihar School of Yoga was established, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle of yoga as practical and scientific systems were unknown, even in Indian society. From the beginning, yoga training and propagation by the Bihar School of Yoga took the form of intensive residential programs, in which yoga was taught as a way to qualitatively enhance physical health, mental peace, emotional harmony. A sequence of progression in yoga was defined fifty years ago by Swami Satyananda, by giving systematic training first in hatha yoga, raja yoga, and kriya yoga, as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. Simultaneously, training in *antaranga*, internal, aspect of karma yoga, bhakti and jnana yoga was provided through the lifestyle and inspiration of the ashram environment. A holistic or integral yoga system developed in which the yoga aspirant

could awaken and integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands. The different *angas*, limbs, of yoga become the means of attaining this personal harmony and integrated expression.

In the early 1940s, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by teachers and masters of different traditions, introducing the idea that through the practice of yoga one could explore the body, mind, emotions, and have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. The first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to human society according to the need of the society at that time. In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety, tension and to improve the physical and mental functions. In the 1980s, research into the various possibilities and potentials of yoga to assist and promote physical and mental health took the forefront. By the 1990s, a rapid increase in the popularity of the practice of asana was evident across the globe. The asana component of yoga had been accepted worldwide and other components of yoga were relegated to the background and largely ignored by the mainstream practitioners and majority of yoga teachers. Today, 28 million people are practising yoga in the United States alone and statistics estimate 300 million practitioners worldwide.

In 2013, the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers, students and aspirants participated in this historic event either in person or through the internet. The Convention was a milestone that marked the completion of fifty years of yoga propagation. The mandate of taking yoga from shore to shore and door to door was fulfilled. Over a fifty-year period, with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance had taken place. The chapter of yoga propagation was complete and when one chapter closed, the next chapter opened.

Thus the World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga.

The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision of yoga not as a practice but as a *vidya*, a wisdom to be understood, imbibed and expressed in life. This understanding of the fundamental need for integral development was the vision of Swami Satyananda, which he imparted and taught through the concept of the *yoga chakra*, or the wheel of yoga.

The second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and the teachings which are being presented are not concerned with propagation of the practices of yoga. Isolated practices of yoga do not bring about the qualitative change and spiritual evolution intended and envisaged by the seers. The transcendence of the negative and restricting conditions and the real evolution and growth of the personality takes place only when the *vidya* of yoga is comprehended, absorbed and realized.

The profundity of yogic understanding must increase and the depths of yoga must be fathomed, if the *vidya* is to be realized and maintained for future generations. The experience and wisdom of accomplished yogis and spiritual scientists is recorded in the scriptural and classical texts detailing each *anga* of yoga. The second chapter teachings are a progressive effort to discern and elucidate the experiences and realizations of the ancient seers, within the blueprint of the *yoga chakra*.

For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The *yoga vidya* dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to *sadhana* and makes a sincere effort to experience the aims defined by the different *angas* of yoga. Until that sincerity awakens, the commitment to adhere to the system and the *vidya* of yoga is lacking. With sincerity, seriousness and commitment, each aspirant has to accept responsibility for their own development and betterment in life.

Ultimately, yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. For, once the yogic principles are imbibed and become part of life, the attitudes, perceptions, interactions, the mind, actions and

behaviours will improve. To meet the challenge of the second chapter, the expressive and the behavioural components of yoga, the antaranga and the bahiranga aspects, have to come together. When head, heart and hands unite, an ordinary moment can become divine. An ordinary life can become a divine life.

To Live a Yogic Lifestyle

What is a yogic life? How do you live a yoga lifestyle? Swami Niranjanananda has identified two cornerstones necessary for a yogic lifestyle. The first of these are the yoga capsules; the second are the yamas and niyamas of yoga. They are the two foundations which allow you to integrate yoga into your daily routine, to improve the quality of your involvement in the world, the material dimension of your life, and at the same time strengthen the spiritual dimension of your life – your connection with your inner self, your inner being.

YOGA CAPSULE

Considering the lack of time for yogic practice and the speed of life in modern times, Swami Niranjana has introduced a specific sequence of sadhana, a set of practices that are easy to do, that take only about twenty minutes to complete and which will give benefits on all levels of being. He called this sadhana the 'yoga capsule'. Just as you take one vitamin capsule a day for good health, you can take a 'yoga capsule' to balance the energies in the body, improve mental efficiency, harmonize the emotions, and bring excellence in undertakings. With this sadhana, you can incorporate yoga in your lifestyle, without major adjustments, for your betterment and upliftment.

The yoga capsule contains three mantras, three to five asanas, one pranayama and a short reflection or relaxation. This capsule is to be 'taken' every day. Everyone can spare twenty minutes out of twenty-four hours of the day. By adopting this capsule, yoga will become part of your daily lifestyle and spiritualize it.

Become a gardener

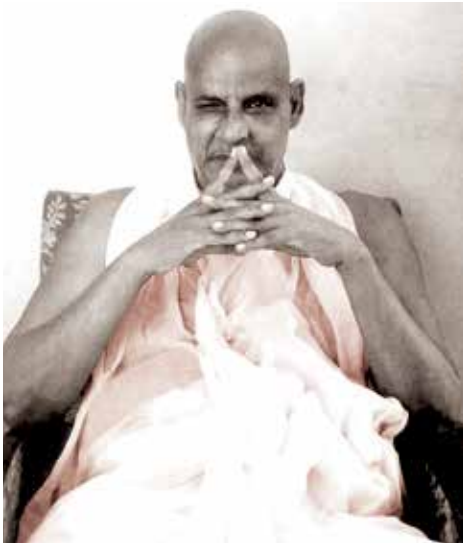
Often it is said that you have to be a warrior to win in life, but a warrior wins by shedding blood and battling others. Yoga teaches that you have to be a gardener in life. We have been given a barren piece of land and through our personal effort we have to convert it into a beautiful garden. It requires hard work and diligent effort to remove the rocks and weeds, break up the earth, and prepare proper beds. It is only then that we plant the seeds. Once planted, we protect them.

This is the process that you go through when you practise yoga, not to satisfy the whims of your mind, but to follow and experience the aims set by yoga. Yogic goals are very clearly defined: cultivation of awareness, disciplining and restructuring the personality, managing the mental and emotional distractions and disturbances, and becoming the observer of your life and actions. These are the initial goals

of yoga. When you focus on these goals and strive to achieve them, this is yoga sadhana. When you follow the dictates of your mind, it is yoga practice. When you integrate different yoga practices to aid the development of potentials in life, you begin to live a yogic lifestyle.

The yoga capsule is a specific sequence of sadhana to incorporate yoga into your lifestyle. It will help to create a positive and uplifting environment at home and bring creativity into all that you do. This is the process of yoga in which you have to learn to become a gardener.

In his *Song of Little*, Swami Sivananda beautifully describes the method of transforming everyday life into a yogic lifestyle:



Eat a little,
drink a little,
Talk a little,
sleep a little,
Mix a little,
move a little,
Serve a little,
rest a little,
Do asana a little,
do pranayama a little,
Reflect a little,
do vichara a little,
Do japa a little,
do kirtan a little,
Write mantra a little,
meditate a little.

By means of small adjustments and positive yogic inputs to your routine, the flowers of yogic life are cultivated and given the sustenance to bloom fully in daily living.

YOGA LIFESTYLE YAMAS AND NIYAMAS



Yamas and niyamas are expressions, behaviours and conditionings to fill the mind with positivity and inspiration. People think of yamas and niyamas as ethical and moral teachings, yet they represent the emergence of your connection with the positive dimension of your nature and provide an antidote to negativity. They take you in the most positive direction that you can aspire for. Yamas reach inside and change you from within, while niyamas are the external actions that you perform to experience the positive change internally.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Each branch of yoga has its own set of yamas and niyamas according to the aim and purpose of that yoga. The specific yamas and niyamas have been presented along with each branch of yoga in these books. Apart from these, Swami Niranjanananda has imparted a set of yamas and niyamas drawn from the yogic scriptures that create and support a yogic lifestyle. The ancient texts, present yamas and niyamas as a way to enhance the quality of life.

Known as the ‘yoga lifestyle yamas and niyamas’, they connect you directly with positivity and goodness and will give you a better understanding of your inherently luminous nature. They can help you to overcome the influence of the six internal conditions spoken of in yogic scriptures: *kama*, desire and lust; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, delusion and infatuation; *mada*, arrogance; and *matsarya*, envy, jealousy and competitiveness.

Lifestyle yamas

Manahprasad: Happiness without an external cause. Happiness is your true nature – this has to be realized by connecting with the positive side of your personality and the beauty of life. No matter what circumstances you find yourself in, look within and smile at yourself and the situation at hand. This will change your perspective. Manahprasad is an antidote to kama, desire.

Kshama: Forgiveness. The ability to let go of feelings of resentment, anger or hurt by clearing out the negativity through forgiveness and coming back to a state of happiness and balance. Kshama, forgiveness, is an antidote to anger and arrogance.

Danti: Mental restraint. The ability to empty the mind of negativity and to live with contentment and inner discipline. This helps to prevent anything building up in your mind to the point where it results in an outward explosion. Danti, mental restraint, is an antidote to lust, anger and greed.

Adweshtha: To be without envy, hatred, separation and the feeling of division. Adweshtha leads to *atmabhava*, seeing

yourself in others and feeling for them as you feel for your own family. You begin to see the spark of divinity in all beings. Adweshta is an antidote to anger and envy.

Bhava shuddhi: Purity of intention. Bhava shuddhi leads you from a state of *tamas* to *sattwa*, cultivating and expressing *sattwic* qualities. *Sadvichara*, *sadvyavahara*, *satkarma*, right thinking, right behaviour and right action are the outcome of bhava shuddhi. Bhava shuddhi is an antidote to anger, greed, infatuation and envy.

Shantata: Serenity. With shantata you are able to maintain a balanced state in all circumstances. No distraction or dissipation will sway you from your inner equipoise and peace. Shantata is an antidote to anger, arrogance and envy.

Lifestyle niyamas

Japa: Repetition of mantra. Japa disconnects you from the activities of the senses which keep the mind in an externalized and outgoing state, making it impossible to discover inner happiness and contentment. Japa is like a cool breeze on a hot day – it provides relief for some time from the mental involvement with the external world. Japa comes as an antidote to desire and is paired with *manahprasada*, happiness.

Namaskara: Salutations towards another person. Namaskara is an expression of humility for you make the first step towards the another person with goodwill, kindness and openness. It is not the physical head but the head of *ahamkara*, the ego, which bows. Namaskara, saluting another, is an antidote to anger and arrogance. It is joined with *kshama*, forgiveness.

Indriya nigraha: Managing sensorial distractions and dissipations. In *indriya nigraha*, you cultivate a judicious use of the senses with discrimination and appropriateness. *Indriya nigraha* is an antidote to lust, anger, greed, and completes *danti*, mental restraint.

Maitri: Friendliness and goodwill towards all. You start with first accepting yourself and then you extend *maitri* to

all. It is not the same as friendship. In friendship there is still demand and expectations, while maitri is unconditional. Maitri comes as an antidote to anger and envy and is related with adweshta, freedom from duality.

Titiksha: Patience and endurance, titiksha develops stability and contentment. Titiksha is an antidote to anger, greed, infatuation and envy and is paired with bhava shuddhi, purity of intention.

Niyamitata: Regularity which is expressed as a regulated lifestyle. Sticking to a regular routine with determination and having regularity in action, niyamitata finds its expression in a peaceful and regulated yogic lifestyle. Niyamitata comes as an antidote to anger, arrogance and envy. It corresponds to shantata, equipoise.

Yoga Lifestyle Yamas	Yoga Lifestyle Niyamas
<i>Manahprasad</i> (happiness)	<i>Japa</i> (mantra repetition)
<i>Kshama</i> (forgiveness)	<i>Namaskara</i> (salutations to another)
<i>Danti</i> (mental restraint)	<i>Indriya nigraha</i> (sensorial restraint)
<i>Adweshta</i> (without division)	<i>Maitri</i> (friendliness)
<i>Bhava shuddhi</i> (pure intention)	<i>Titiksha</i> (ability to harmonize contrary conditions)
<i>Shantata</i> (serenity)	<i>Niyamitata</i> (regulated lifestyle)

The journey towards positivity is made by keeping the uplifting traits of yama and niyama at the forefront of your mind. You will learn how to cultivate these positive qualities in your daily life with the practice of Review of the Day and by keeping a Spiritual Diary.

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR A YOGA LIFESTYLE

Mantra sadhana (morning – on waking)

When you wake up in the morning, the mind is relaxed, the senses are at peace and there are no mental, emotional or intellectual distractions. Therefore, the first impression the mind should receive in the morning is the positive input of mantra.

Immediately upon waking up, before you climb out of bed, sit on your bed. At that moment when you are neither fully awake nor fully asleep, when you are drowsy, when you are in between sleep and wakefulness, the subconscious mind is at its most active.

As soon as you wake up in the morning, the first thing you should do is practise the three mantras: Mahamrityunjaya mantra, eleven times; Gayatri mantra, eleven times; and Durga mantra, three times.

At that moment make three resolves, three *sankalpas*. These *sankalpas* are like seeds that you plant in the ground, then you forget about them and allow the seeds to germinate naturally and spontaneously.



Make a sankalpa for healing, energy, power, immunity and strength. Then chant the Mahamrityunjaya mantra eleven times.

*Om tryambakam yajamahe sugandhim
pushktivardhanam.*

*Urvaa rukamiva bandhanaat mriyoy
muksheeya maamritaat.*

Make a sankalpa for wisdom, inner clarity, intuitive knowledge, learning, perception and opening the dormant doors of intelligence. Then chant the Gayatri mantra eleven times.

Om bhur bhuvah svaha tatsavitur varenyam.

Bhargo devasya dheemahi dhiyo yonah prachodayaat.



Make a sankalpa for overcoming distress in life and for experiencing peace and harmony. Then chant the thirty-two names of Durga three times.

Om durgaadurgaartishamaneedurgaapadviniivaarinee.

Durgamachchhedineedurgasaadhineedurganaashinee.

Durgatoddhaarineedurganihanreedurgamaapahaa.

Durgamajnaanadaadurgadaityalokadavaanala.

Durgamaadurgamaalokaadurgamaatmasvaroopinee.

Durgamaargapradaadurgamavidyaadurgamaashritaa.

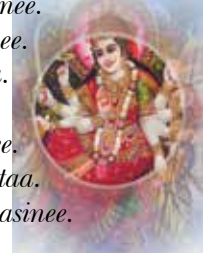
Durgamajnaanasamsthaanaadurgamadhyaanabhaasinee.

urgamohaadurgamagaadurgamaarthasvaroopinee.

Durgamaasurasamhantreedurgamaayudhadhaarinee.

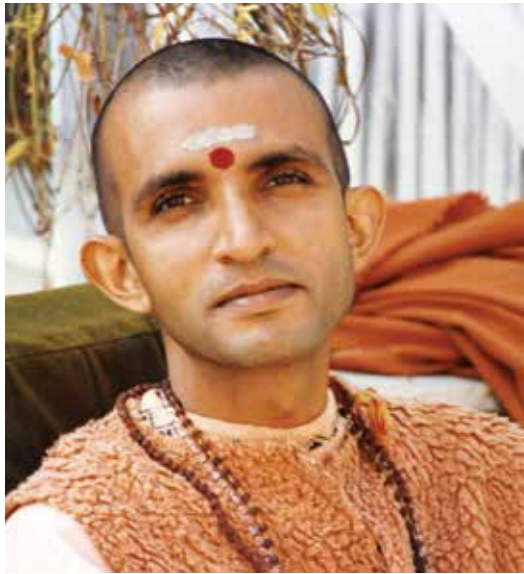
Durgamaangeedurgamataadurgamyaadurgameshvaree.

Durgabheemaadurgabhaamaadurgabhaadurgadaarinee.



Those who have tried this method of mantra early in the morning find that they are able to remain optimistic, positive, creative and clear for the rest of the day. The mantras provide strength to the mind and act as a shield that protects you from all the negative influences of the outer world. They keep the mind undisturbed when faced by the worries, stresses and the troubles of daily life.

Review of the Day



Every night before you go to sleep, analyze your day, from the time you woke up until the present moment. What did you do? How did you interact with people, circumstances and situations? When did you feel angry? When did you feel confused? When did you feel depressed? Just observe each moment of the day; run through each hour of the day. If there has been some problem in any communication, notice it and think, “If I encountered the same situation again, is there a better way to deal with it?” In this way, observe your responses and reactions on a day-to-day basis. It only takes five minutes at night. In the course of time, you will find that you are able to control your own reactive responses in a better manner. Analysis of the events of the day must be done after meditation, as you lie on your bed, when you are about to go to sleep, to clear your mind of all the clutter that has accumulated during the day.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

In your nightly Review of the Day, you can also choose to incorporate one pair of yama and niyama for one month at a time. Take a few moments to recall any situations in which you were happy if, for example, you have chosen manahprasada as the yama. Identify moments of the day when you were happy. Then connect with the energy and positivity of those moments of happiness, bring it to the present moment and extend it for as long as you are able. Each week extend the feeling of happiness a few minutes more. Then identify moments of unhappiness. Reflect on the situation and on the negative quality in yourself that it highlights. Was there a cause to your unhappiness? Was the root cause anger, envy, pride? Then replace the negative quality with the positive and uplifting quality of happiness, strengthen it and immerse yourself in that experience of happiness. You can do this practice either sitting in a meditation posture with your eyes closed, lying in bed or you can record your observations in your Spiritual Diary.

The niyamas are the external actions that you perform to reinforce the positive change. So, for example, japa or mantra repetition can give you a brief experience of the happiness you are cultivating through manahprasada. Similarly, namaskara or greeting everyone with openness and goodwill will support your effort to let go of resentment and nurture kshama, forgiveness.

The yamas and niyamas allow you to discover and express the best in you. They are not disciplines or moral codes; they are your true nature and make you a true human being.

Spiritual Diary

Swami Sivananda emphasizes the importance of keeping a spiritual diary. It is a checklist of spiritual progress, not a patient recipient for your emotions. A spiritual diary is a matter-of-fact record, a practical tool for chronicling your behaviour, attitudes and interactions in daily life.

For each branch of yoga, a set of questions is proposed which can be answered regularly over a sustained period of time. As you become more established in your sadhana and your lifestyle adjustments, you may want to change some questions and add new, more relevant ones.

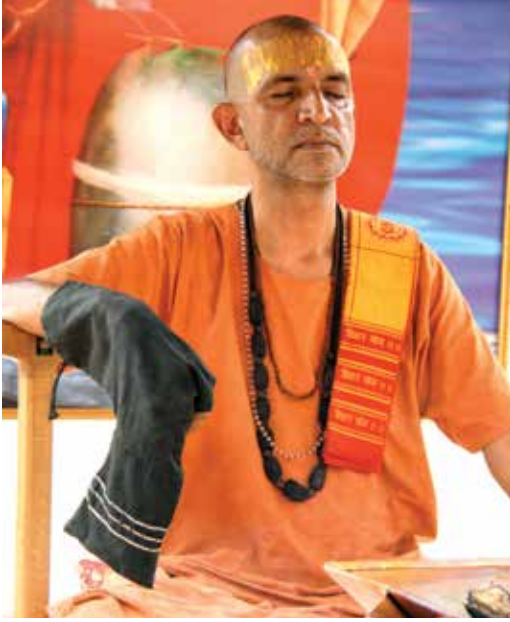


Turn back the leaves of your spiritual diary. Mark your spiritual progress. Even if there is a setback in certain things, do not despair. Be regular in keeping your spiritual diary. Spiritual progress will be greatly quickened.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Ajapa japa

Ajapa japa is a pratyahara practice that can be practised for 5 to 10 minutes on a daily basis before you go to sleep at night. *Ajapa* means spontaneous, while *japa* means mantra repetition. It is the spontaneous repetition of mantra that comes from within you. The breath is used as the vehicle for awareness coupled with the mantra *So Ham*, the inherent mantra of the breath. The mantra *Om* can also be used.



Japa becomes a method to disconnect the mind for a little while, whether ten minutes or half an hour, and connect with something different. The connection between your mind and the senses and sense objects is broken. In that break you direct your attention and awareness towards discovering your inner nature and that is where you will find peace.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Antar mouna

The practice of *antar mouna*, inner silence, has various stages which induce introspection and awareness of thoughts and the thought process. During the practice of antar mouna you learn to see the workings of the mind and gain some understanding of the inner environment: thoughts, counter-thoughts, emotional reactions. It is a key technique to develop the awareness process. In this way you acquire a means to manage the mental patterns. Antar mouna can be practised for a few moments after your morning practices or at night before you go to sleep, for 10 minutes. However, as the practice trains your awareness, it is one of the permanent sadhanas that can be practised throughout the day by becoming aware of your senses, thoughts, reactions and emotions.



The Sanskrit word *mouna* means 'silence', and *antar* means 'inner'. Therefore, the English name of this practice is 'inner silence'. It is a great sadhana designed to make the aspirant aware of the inner silence as well as the inner noise which generally prevents one from knowing the silence.

Antar mouna can be practised at any time by simply reflecting on the question, 'What am I thinking? What is occurring now in my mental sphere?' When practised many times daily, this witnessing process becomes an automatic occurrence continuing by itself and showing you who you are, what you are doing here and where you are going.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

SWAN meditation

SWAN meditation is a technique developed by Swami Niranjanananda for understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. The practice leads to self-understanding, self-improvement and self-acceptance. SWAN meditation can be practised once a week, on a Sunday for example. Reflect on your experiences during the week and identify the strengths, weaknesses and needs you saw in yourself. List all of these on one page. Each week you can review your list. A few points can be crossed off, while others might be added. The practice should take about 10 to 15 minutes. SWAN meditation may also be practised at the end of each day before bed when you are writing in your Spiritual Diary.



SWAN is a fascinating technique because we become aware of the various traits of the human personality. SWAN is an acronym. S stands for strength of mind, W for weakness of mind, A for ambitions in life, and N for needs in life. We all have certain strengths, in some they are more active, and in others they are less active. We all have weaknesses, such as lack of self-confidence, fear, feelings of inferiority, and various emotional and psychic imbalances.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Yoga nidra

Yoga nidra is a technique that induces deep relaxation on all levels. Yoga nidra is practised lying on the back in the pose of shavasana. During the practice the body remains completely still. The awareness remains alert, following the guided instructions. The complete practice can be performed daily for 30 minutes. If you are short of time, you may practise for 10 to 20 minutes daily. It is generally recommended that you practise yoga nidra as soon as you get home after the day's activities, before dinner and interacting with others at home. However, it can also be practised before sleep to promote a restful sleep or on waking if you have had a restless night. In fact, it can be performed at any time that is convenient for you, but try and make it a fixed time daily.



Yoga nidra is a means of contacting the source of self-knowledge and inspiration lying within each person. It is a technique of 'self-induced dreaming' in which the treasure house of our own consciousness can be systematically illuminated, explored and then used to enrich our daily life.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Yoga vidya

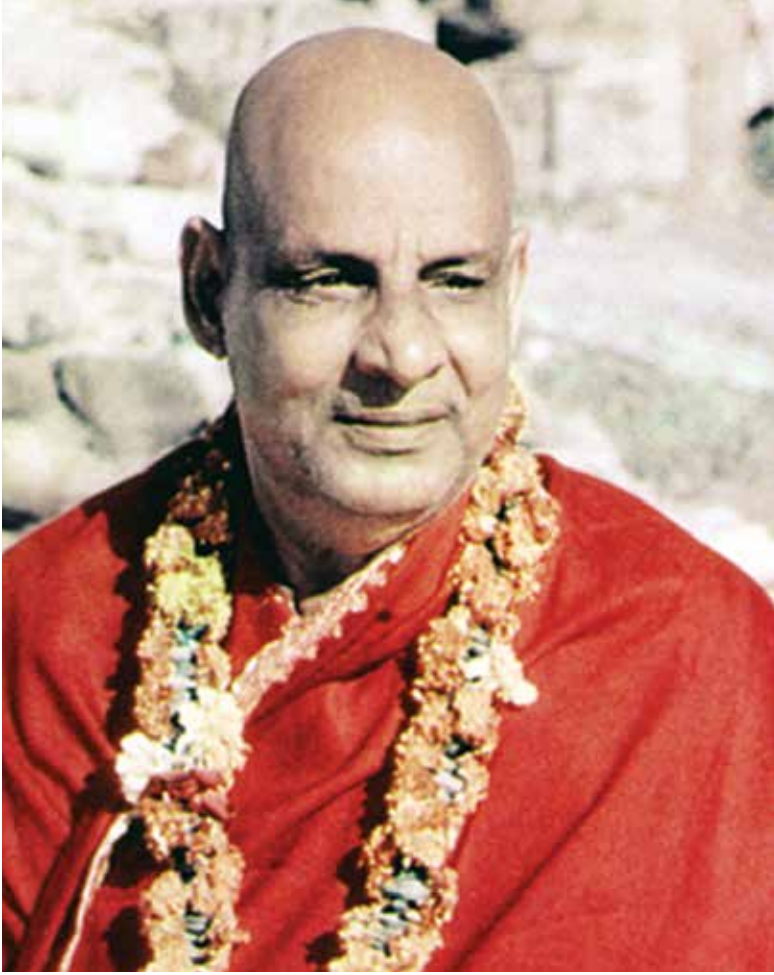
According to the Satyananda Yoga tradition, yoga is not just a practice or philosophy, yoga is a way of life. Yoga is a lifestyle which enhances the quality of your day-to-day activities, interactions, thoughts and emotions.

Swami Sivananda Saraswati, paramguru of the tradition, established what he called ‘integral yoga’, a combination of six branches of yoga which bring harmony and balance to the head, heart and hands of each individual. Swami Satyananda Saraswati developed the system further as the *yoga chakra*, the wheel of yoga, including hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga, the *bahiranga* or external experiential yoga, and karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, the *antaranga* or inner expressive yoga.

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati has introduced the concept of the yoga capsule, small doses of each yoga that can be integrated throughout daily life. Alongside he emphasizes the importance of yoga lifestyle yamas and niyamas.

The intention of the present publication *Yoga for Everyone* is to allow you to explore the vast treasure of *yoga vidya*, the science of yoga, in a practical manner that allows you to find peace and contentment in life.

For more detailed descriptions of each practice, refer to Yoga Publications Trust publications or take the guidance of a competent yoga teacher.



Equanimity is yoga. Serenity is yoga. Skill in actions is yoga. Control of the senses and the mind is yoga. Anything by which the best and the highest in life can be attained is also yoga. Yoga is thus all-embracing, all-inclusive and universal in its application leading to all-round development of body, mind and soul.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



When you choose a yogic life, you do not adopt a new religion or become puritan overnight or change your external lifestyle. By adopting a yogic way of life, you are able to express your awareness better. You need to have a deeper experience and in order to have that, you must adjust many items related to your life – and that is yogic life.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Yoga is not a practice for grownups to overcome their ills of body and mind but it is a lifestyle to be lived from birth to death. If you want to improve yourself and become creative, happy, satisfied and successful, take everything in life as a form of sadhana.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Part 1

Introducing
Hatha Yoga

1

Aims

Hatha yoga is one of the most widely practised yet the most misunderstood of yoga branches today. The emphasis on its physical component has limited its scope and benefits, and its original aim, as envisaged by the yogis, has been forgotten. However, if even the simplest of the hatha yoga practices are done keeping in mind the real intent, not only will there be a remarkable difference in the experience of the practices but also in one's personality, life and environment.

The aim of hatha yoga can be found in the name itself. 'Hatha' is derived from two *beeja mantras*, seed sounds, *Ham* and *Tham*. *Ham* is the mantra signifying pingala nadi, the solar energy, the vital force or *prana shakti* characterized by the human qualities of extroversion, activity and masculinity and is associated with the left hemisphere of the brain and the sympathetic nervous system. *Tham* is the mantra signifying ida nadi, the lunar energy, mental force or *chitta shakti* expressed as qualities of introversion, reflection, creativity and femininity and is associated with the right hemisphere of the brain and the parasympathetic nervous system. The aim of hatha yoga is to balance these two major flows of *prana* or vital life energy within the human system.

By attaining balance of ida and pingala nadis, prana ascends through the most important energy pathway in the human system known as sushumna nadi, the central channel

within the spinal cord representing the qualities of harmony, peace, understanding and wisdom. This is said to lead to the awakening of ajna chakra, an energy centre at the mid-brain at the approximate location of the pineal gland, associated with pure transcendental awareness.

There are two classical texts on hatha yoga: *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Yogi Swatmarama meant for householders and general practitioners, and *Gheranda Samhita* by Sage Gheranda intended for yogis, sadhus and renunciates. Both texts end in chapters on dhyana and samadhi, indicating a progression of evolution from the gross to subtle to divine. Their descriptions reveal a regeneration of the entire human system that traverses through *annamaya kosha*, the physical body, all the way to *anandamaya kosha*, the bliss body, when the path is followed to the end, though typically hatha yoga is seen as impacting mostly the annamaya and pranamaya koshas, the dimensions of matter and energy. Yet, through hatha yoga the physical body becomes an instrument for higher experience.

Hatha yoga is a practical system that employs multiple tools to achieve its aims. Each limb or *anga* has an aim which provides a progressive sequence towards the final aim. The aims of each limb can be summarized as follows:

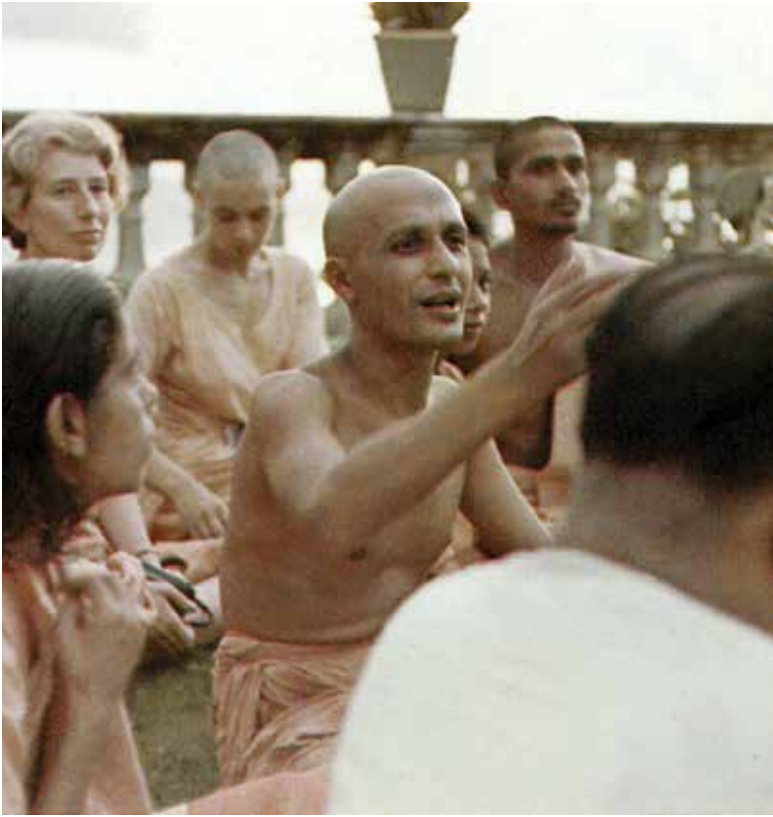
- *Shatkarma*: to attain purification and cleansing of the body.
- *Asana*: to attain physical strength, firmness and steadiness; remove blocks and disease; to ensure free flow of prana and to activate the *chakras* or energy centres.
- *Pranayama*: to attain lightness; purification of *nadis* or energy pathways; to balance and increase prana.
- *Mudra*: to attain mental and pranic steadiness and stillness by redirecting the flow of prana internally.
- *Bandha*: to lock and redirect the flow of prana into sushumna nadi; to loosen the *granthis* or psychic knots at the neck, abdomen and pelvis which impede the flow of prana through sushumna nadi.
- *Pratyahara, dharana, samadhi*: to awaken inner experience and ajna chakra, luminous transcendental awareness.

Each limb should be experienced thoroughly before progressing to the next. In this way, the sincere practitioner reaps the best results.



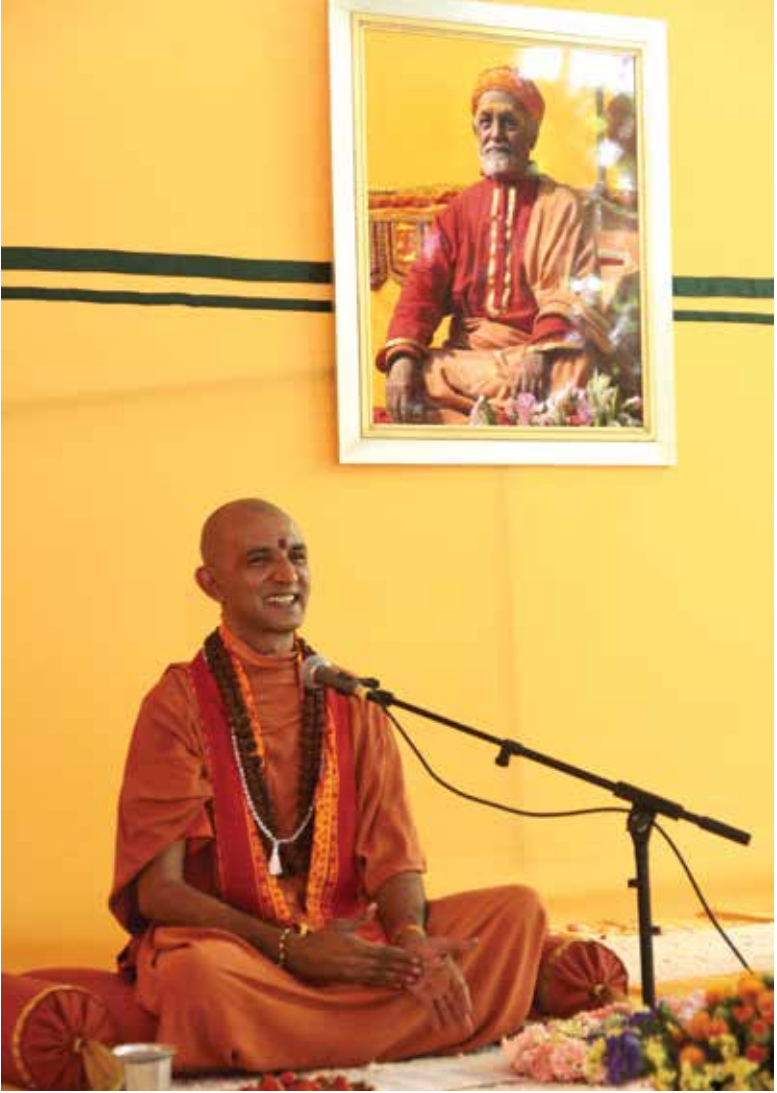
The two syllables *Ha* and *Tha* refer to the solar and lunar energies in the physical body. The lunar energy and the solar energy are also known as mind and prana, yin and yang, as negative and positive poles, as space and time. In the individual body they are known as ida nadi and pingala nadi, the two forces flowing within the human system. The purpose of hatha yoga is to bring together these two forces in ajna chakra at the top of the spine.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Hatha yoga is practised in order to initiate a process in this physical body whereby the pranic molecules and the mental forces, which interact with each other in the scheme of life and existence, may be transformed. Unless the physical molecules are transformed it is of no use to discuss compassion and unity. A great challenge is open to humanity. If matter in its ultimate form is energy, then this physical body can be transformed through the systematic practice of the six cleansing techniques of hatha yoga, the shatkarmas. After this, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha should be practised.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The whole body is a composition of prana and mind. Hatha yoga is attaining balance between the physical and mental pranic forces.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

2

Practices and Techniques

As a part of the sadhana aspect of the Yoga Chakra, hatha yoga is a practical system providing a number of tools that can be used to attain its aims. The five main groups of practices – shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha – each have multiple techniques.

Shatkarma

The shatkarma are six purificatory practices to cleanse and detoxify the body; *shat* means six, and *karma* means action. The shatkarma rectify imbalances of *vata dosha* or gas, *pitta dosha* or fire and acidity, *kapha dosha* or mucus. Imbalances arise due to lifestyle and dietary irregularities, stress, anxiety, and exposure to pollutants, chemicals and other impurities. The six groups of cleansing practices are as follows:

1. **Neti:** nasal cleansing. The practices of neti are like having one's own personal ENT doctor as they help to improve the condition of the ears, nose, throat, and have beneficial effects on the eyes, tonsils and head region generally. Neti is commonly performed with warm saline water, however it can also be practised with thread, milk, amaroli (urine), ghee, oil or yoghurt under competent guidance.
2. **Dhauti:** a series of techniques to cleanse the entire alimentary canal from mouth to anus using water, air, cloth and other natural mediums. If done with water they help to balance pitta and kapha doshas, if performed

with air they balance vata dosha. The categories of dhauti include the following:

- a) *Antar dhauti* (internal cleansing): i. vatsara, cleansing the intestines with air; ii. vahnisara dhauti (agnisara kriya), cleansing with the essence of fire; iii. varisara dhauti or shankhaprakshalana, a combination of basti and dhauti cleansing the entire digestive tract with warm saline water; iv. bahiskrita (rectal cleaning).
 - b) *Hrid dhauti* (cleansing of the chest and stomach region): i. vaman dhauti or regurgitative cleansing using warm saline water; ii. danda dhauti, using a soft stick; iii. vastra dhauti, cleansing with a cloth.
 - c) *Danta dhauti* (head): cleansing of the teeth, gums, tongue, eyes, ears and sinuses.
 - d) *Moola shodhana*: anal cleansing.
3. **Basti**: cleansing techniques for the lower abdomen, large and small intestines. These are like a yogic enema using water or air.
 4. **Kapalbhati**: frontal brain cleansing using pranayama techniques which can also involve the use of water.
 5. **Nauli/lauliki karma**: abdominal massage by isolating the different groups of abdominal muscles, leading to a coordinated churning action of the muscles.
 6. **Trataka**: concentrated gazing. As the last of the shatkarma, trataka forms a bridge between the physically-oriented practices and the mentally-oriented practices. Initially concentration is performed on an external object, *bahir trataka*, such as a candle flame, which leads to *antar trataka*, gazing at an internal image or symbol.

Asana

In hatha yoga, the practice of *asana*, postures, ranges from dynamic to static postures. The practices are performed at a natural speed, not too fast or slow, the same as the speed one walks, talks, eats and performs daily activities. Asanas can be divided into the following categories:

- Beginners, intermediate, advanced.

- Series: standing, balancing, relaxation, meditation and padmasana (lotus postures), forward bending, backward bending, twisting, inversions, eye exercises, plus preparatory practices such as the pawanmuktasana series developed by Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Pranayama

Pranayama has two definitions. *Prana* means vital energy or life force. *Yama* means control; *ayama* means extension or expansion, thus pranayama involves controlling, regulating, expanding and increasing the quantity of prana. Pranayama techniques use the breath as the medium to access the dimension of prana as breath, i.e. the tangible aspect of prana. You inhale not only air when you breathe in but also prana. Prana is an abstract notion for most people but the breath can be felt. There are four aspects of breathing: inhalation, exhalation, internal breath retention and external breath retention. There are four stages in pranayama: one, developing breath control; two, realizing the different pranas and moving them; three, awakening prana in the *chakras*, energy centres; and four, *kaivalya* state, attaining the meditative state of pranayama.

Mudra

Mudras are physical and psychic gestures or attitudes which redirect prana to the higher brain centres, just as a mirror deflects light. There are five categories of mudras using hands, head, whole body postures, locks and perineal contractions.

Bandha

Mudra bandhas are generally called just bandhas. *Bandha* means to hold, to tighten or lock. Bandhas lock the pranas in particular areas and redirect their flow into sushumna nadi. There are four bandhas: jalandhara bandha, throat lock; uddiyana bandha, abdominal contraction lock; moola bandha, perineal contraction; and maha bandha or the great lock, combining all three bandhas.



It is important to know what an ideal system of physical culture should be, so that you will be able to judge for yourself the value of yogasanas in the light of the ideal. That system can be safely said to be an ideal system:

Which requires the smallest amount of energy to be spent in order to secure the greatest amount of benefit,

Which can effect a maximum increase in the vital index,

Which can build up a healthy nervous system,

Which can ensure health for the excretory organs of the body,

Which can take care of the circulatory system,

And which can also develop the muscular system.

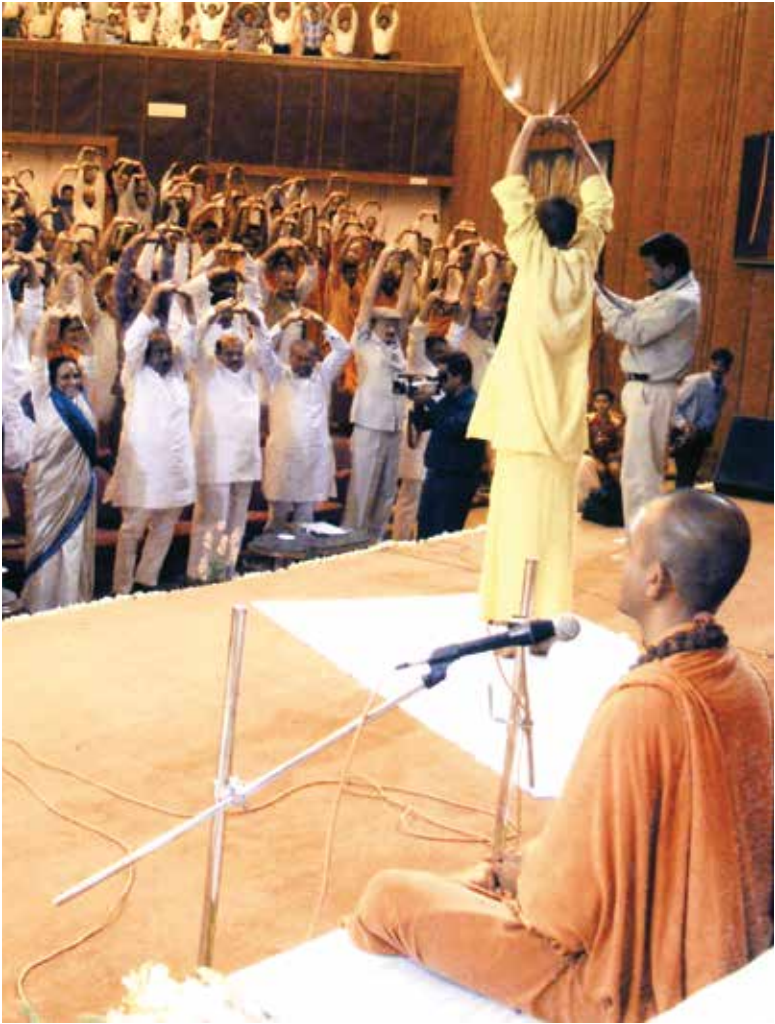
Let us now see how far these few conditions are fulfilled by yogasanas.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Originally there were only six techniques in hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka. These are the cleansing techniques, known as the shatkarma. In the course of time the practices of asana and pranayama were gradually incorporated. Their purpose is to create complete harmony between the body systems and the brain, the brain and the mind, the mind and the spirit. This provides the preparation necessary for the eventual practice of raja yoga, which leads to the states of meditation and samadhi. The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance in the interacting activities and processes of the physical body, mind and energy.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Hatha yoga is commonly identified with the practice of asana and pranayama, but it has a deeper purpose than awareness of the body. Hatha yoga involves balancing, managing and directing the energies that control the body and guide the mind.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

3

Benefits

Through the regular practice of hatha yoga one experiences noticeable benefits physically, emotionally, energetically, mentally and spiritually. These benefits can be immediate such as removal of excess mucus through the practice of jala neti (nasal cleansing), and long-term with regular dedicated practice, such as increased concentration of mind and willpower developed over a period of time with the practice of trataka (concentrated gazing).

Regular practice of hatha yoga impacts the physical level, *annamaya kosha*, the energetic level, *pranamaya kosha*, the mental level, *manomaya kosha*, and these effects may flow through to the psychic and spiritual aspects, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*, of human experience. The main objective of hatha yoga is to create balance between the interacting activities and processes of the pranic and mental forces, which gives a call of awakening to sushumna nadi through which the dormant vital energy ascends to the higher brain centres, thereby illuminating human consciousness.

General

The house, our physical body, needs cleaning before furniture can be put into place and decorations can start. Hatha yoga fulfils the purpose of cleaning. It prepares the body and mind to progress through the system of the Yoga Chakra as envisioned by Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Shatkarma

By practising the shatkarma, the body is purified:

- The excess of the three metabolic products of mucus, gas and acidity are removed, and their formation is regulated and balanced.
- The stomach, intestines, nervous system and other systems are purified.
- Cleansing creates detoxification, removes accumulated toxins and brings the body into a purer, more harmonious state.
- Pranic cleansing of the nadis occurs.
- The dissipated mind becomes pacified.

Asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha

External benefits

- Bones become stronger, joints become smoother in their action, muscles gain flexibility and strength.
- The physical body maintains an optimum condition and health is promoted even in an unhealthy body.
- All the major body systems are purified, balanced and supported: endocrine, digestive, circulatory, excretory, respiratory, reproductive, autonomic nervous systems (sympathetic and parasympathetic).
- Asanas slow down respiratory and metabolic rates plus the consumption of oxygen, and body temperature drops.
- Vitality, stamina and endurance increase.
- Body and mind are harmonized. Physical and mental knots are loosened and released, resulting in release of dormant energy.
- Greater mental clarity and levels of concentration.

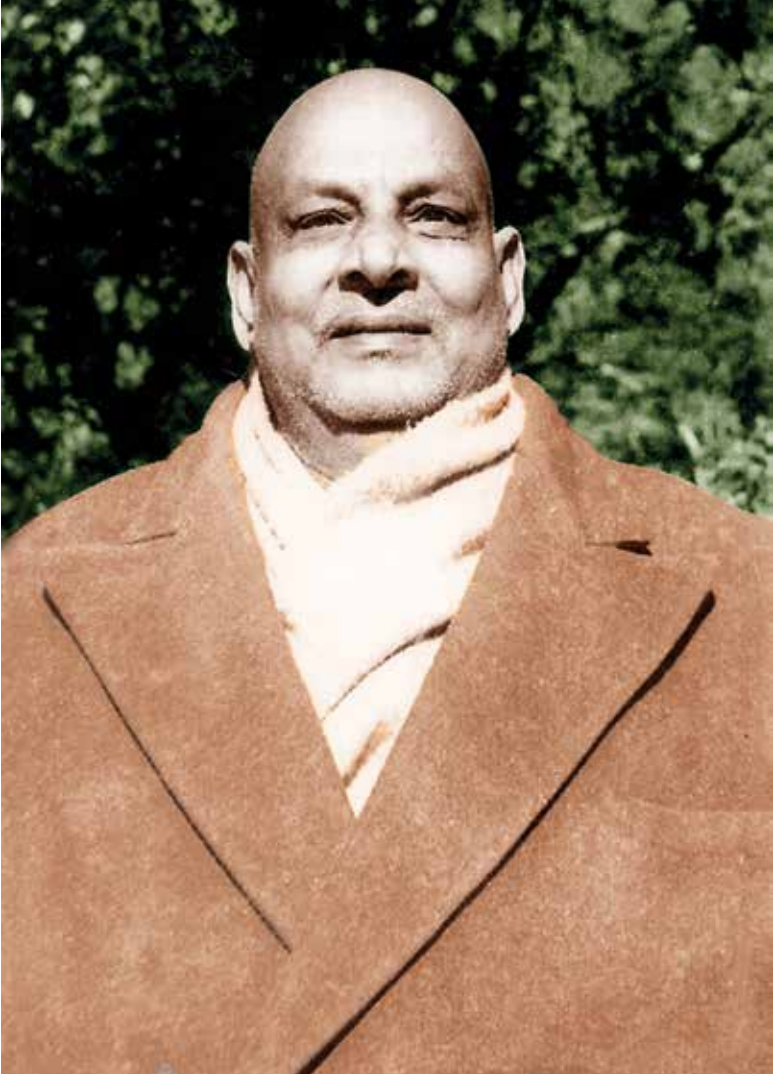
Internal benefits

Through regular practice of hatha yoga techniques over a prolonged period of time, the following benefits can be experienced:

- Greater awareness, relaxation, concentration and meditative states are cultivated.

- Pranic activation and balance of ida and pingala is attained.
- The feeling of lightness in body, mind and emotions increases.
- Self-confidence develops.
- Stored inner negativities and self-imposed restrictions are released, and freedom from restrictive conditioned habit patterns is attained.
- Sense perceptions, cognitions and sensory awareness expands, thereby consciousness and self-awareness increases about the conditions that one creates in one's own body and mind.
- The mind becomes clearer, freer, lighter and more luminous.
- Willpower, patience, endurance and determination develop.
- One becomes more connected to positivity, creativity, understanding and knowledge.





Hatha yoga is a divine blessing for attaining success in any field. Body and mind are instruments which the practice of hatha yoga keeps sound, strong, and full of energy.

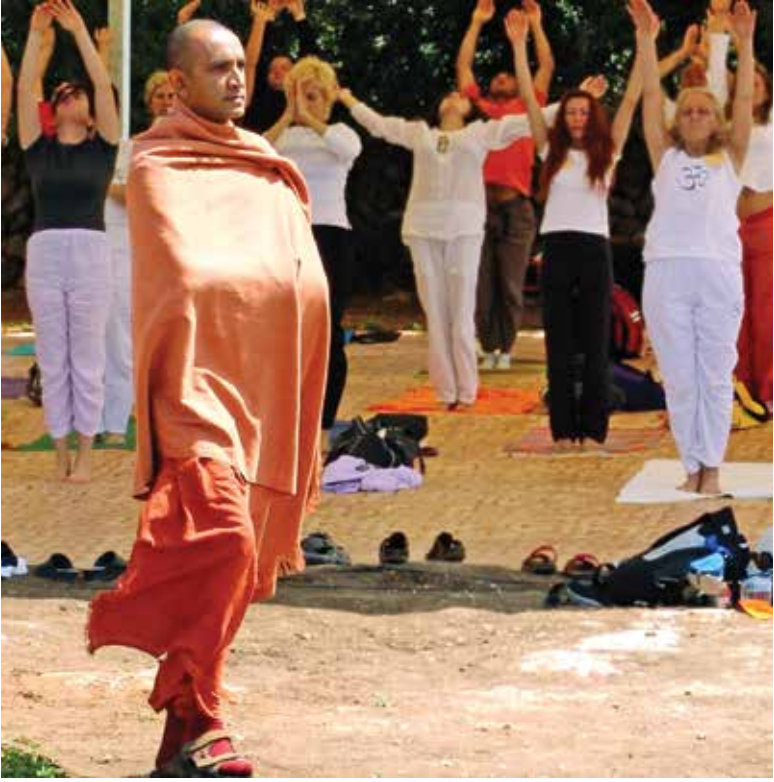
—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Awareness is as essential to the practice of asana as it is to all yoga practices. The purpose of asana practice is to influence, integrate and harmonize all the levels of being: physical, pranic, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. At first it may appear that asanas are merely concerned with the physical level because they deal with the movement of different parts of the body, but they have profound effects at every level of being if they are combined with awareness.

Awareness in this context may be understood as consciously noting sensations in the body, the physical movement, the posture itself, breath control and synchronization, movement of prana, concentration on an area of the body or chakra and, most importantly, witnessing any thoughts or feelings that may arise during the practice. Implicit in the concept of awareness is the acceptance of any thought or feeling which comes uninvited to the mind. This awareness is essential in order to receive optimum benefits from the practices.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The inner personality does not exist without the support of the physical body. Therefore, in order to develop an understanding of the body as it relates to the inner personality, yogis evolved and developed the system of physical postures, asanas. In the present age, researchers and scientists have investigated the effects of asanas on the human body and mind, and have discovered that the greatest imbalances can be removed with the simplest practices. Physical imbalances and illnesses are managed with the practice of asana. Imbalances in the realm of vitality and energy are balanced with the breathing techniques of pranayama.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

4

Obstacles

To gain the outcomes possible through hatha yoga, a basic level of self-effort, discipline, rhythm and routine needs to be established in one's life. Some obstacles encountered when starting or practising a hatha yoga sadhana include:

- Irregular lifestyle, indiscipline.
- Overeating, oversleeping, overthinking
- No time for practice or competing priorities such as family demands, long working hours, overactive social life
- Extensive travel (zone/climate change)
- Laziness, lethargy, lack of willpower or self-effort, unwillingness
- Talkativeness, gossiping, lying, being in the company of people who have no yogic aspirations or awareness, dishonesty in any form
- Doubt in the practice or in one's own ability
- Ambition leading to lack of patience, fascination with *siddhis*, psychic powers, or attainment of spiritual gains.

Simple adjustments are required in one's daily routine to incorporate a regular sadhana. Through a practical routine many of the obstacles can be cleared; optimism and faith in the practice stem from improved physical, mental and emotional health, which creates a positive feedback loop, inspiring one towards further progress.



Obstacles to God-Realization

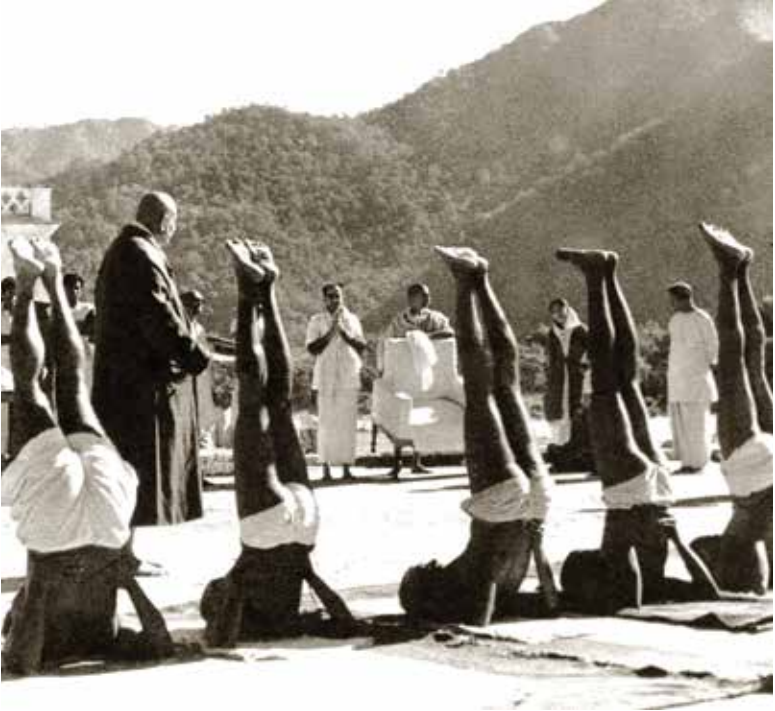
Duality, multiplicity, plurality,
Individuality, slave mentality, dadabadality,
Gadabadality, dambhacharity, asmitaity,
Ahamkarity, raga-dveshity, abhiniveshity,
Sensuality, sensitivity, sentimentality,
Inactivity, rotundity,
Are the obstacles to attain divinity,
Universality, cosmicality, real unity.
Debility, morbidity, anemiatiy,
Pyorrheatiy, blood pressuritiy,
Myopiatiy, presbyopiatiy, amblyopiatiy,
Nyctalopiatiy, hemianopiatiy, doctors mahafoolishnessity,
Maha andhakaraitiy, are the obstacles to attain divinity.
Atrocity, curiosity, cruelty,
Anxiety, partiality, timidity,
Duality, individuality, immorality,
Debility, morbidity, sensuality,
These are the obstacles to attain divinity.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Here are some practical suggestions on how hatha yoga can help overcome some of these obstacles.

- *Sensitivity, sentimentality*: You are easily offended, your feelings are easily hurt; you often experience excessive tenderness, sadness or nostalgia.
Practice: Pawanmuktasana part 2, surya namaskara, balancing asanas; *kshama*, forgiveness.
- *Inactivity*: You often feel reluctant to take action; there is a feeling of apathy.
Practice: surya namaskara, agnisara kriya, nauli, bhastrika pranayama, uddiyana bandha.
- *Anemiaty*: You have a deficiency of red blood cells or haemoglobin in the blood.
Practice: Pawanmuktasana part 1, balancing pranayama.
- *Timidity*: You have lack of courage or confidence; you often feel shy and fearful.
Practice: simhagarjanasana, backward bending asanas, baddha hasta utthanasana, yogic breathing, bhastrika.



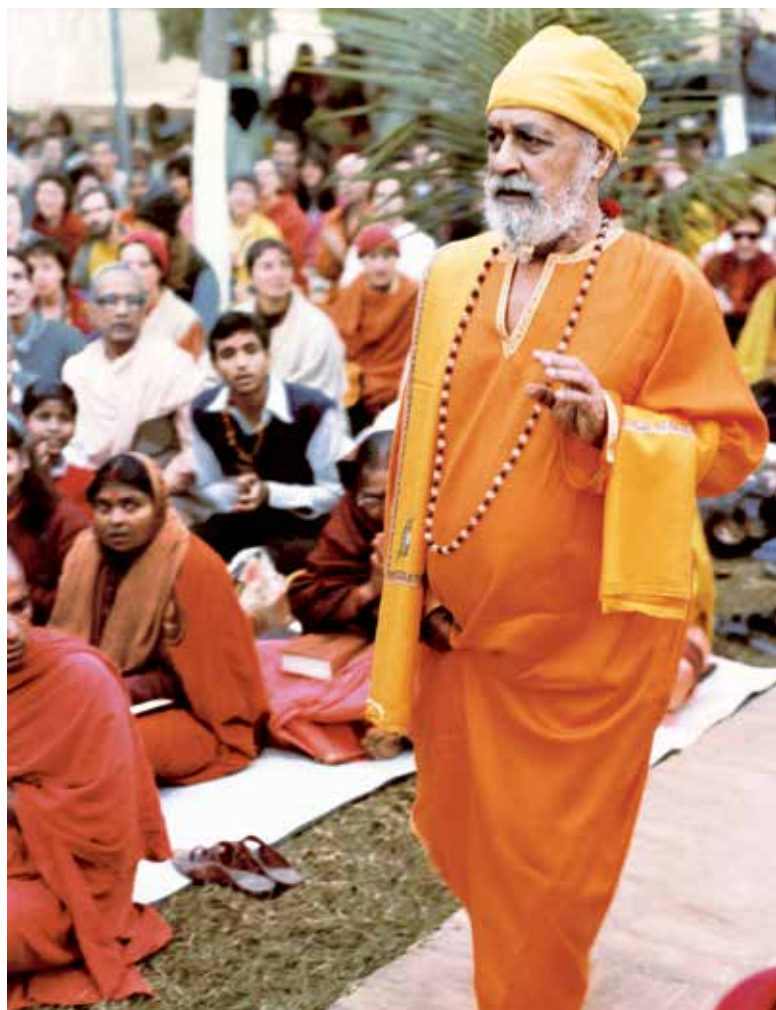


You will have to note very carefully whether you remain stationary on the spiritual path even after many years of spiritual practice or whether you are progressing. To achieve success in any measure in spiritual life is the most difficult and uphill task. Be thoughtful, careful and vigilant. Find out the disturbing causes and remove them.

Be firm and unshakeable in your faith and conviction to transform yourself. Face these passing obstacles and allow nothing to disturb you. Again and again the battle must be won.

Hatha yoga is a divine blessing for attaining success in any field. The body and mind are instruments which the practice of hatha yoga keeps sound, strong and full of energy.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Sometimes there is a tendency to overemphasize the postures or pranayama or something else. However, there has to be an absolute balance of all the practices: asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas. If the mind and body are not pure the pranas cannot function properly.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



When the harmony of the body is disturbed, then it is disease. The meaning of the word 'disease' is disturbed ease. In order to deal with the body, the yogis came up with the system of hatha yoga so that the internal disturbances could be removed, and comfort, ease, stamina and health regained.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

5

Conditions and Precautions

Before embarking on a sadhana of hatha yoga, you must be aware of certain health precautions and seasonal conditions. The list below is general and not exhaustive. For individual conditions and any conditions not listed here, you must consult with your doctor and a competent yoga teacher before commencing.

INDIVIDUAL PRECAUTIONS

Shatkarma

- *Neti* (nasal cleansing): not to be performed during sinusitis, active ear infection or when the nose is completely blocked during a cold or flu; those who suffer from chronic nose bleeding should seek the advice of a competent teacher before practising.
- *Kunjla kriya* (regurgitative cleansing): contraindicated in the case of high blood pressure, heart disease, acute peptic ulcer, hernia, stroke, diabetes with eye problems, raised intracranial pressure, and during pregnancy.
- *Shankhaprakshalana* or *laghoo shankhaprakshalana*: contraindicated in the case of heart or kidney problems; those with high blood pressure can perform laghoo shankhaprakshalana with modifications to the asanas.
- *Agnisara kriya* (cleansing with the essence of fire): should not be performed by people suffering from high blood

pressure, heart disease, stomach ulcers, overactive thyroid gland or chronic diarrhoea. During pregnancy women should refrain from the practice.

- *Nauli* (abdominal massage): should not be attempted by people suffering from heart disease, hypertension, hernia, high blood pressure, abdominal pain, gallstones, acute peptic ulcer, constipation, or those recovering from surgery, especially abdominal surgery.
- *Kapalbhati* (frontal brain cleansing): contraindicated for those who experience frequent nasal bleeding, and in case of high blood pressure or heart disease.
- *Trataka* (concentrated gazing): people with glaucoma should not practise *trataka*. Those with epilepsy, astigmatism, eyestrain and early symptoms of cataract should not practise on a candle flame and may use a black dot as an alternative. Avoid practising *trataka* on the sun as it can damage the eyes. People who are short-sighted and need spectacles can wear these during the practice for a clear image of the symbol.

Asana

- *Pawanmuktasana part 2* (digestive/abdominal group): contraindicated in the case of high blood pressure, severe heart problems, back conditions such as sciatica and slipped or prolapsed disc or soon after abdominal surgery.
- *Pawanmuktasana part 3* (shaktibandha): the squatting practices are contraindicated for those with knee problems or sciatica.
- *Inverted asanas* are contraindicated for those with heart problems, high blood pressure or back conditions especially prolapsed disc; not to be practised when ear infection is present or in the case of glaucoma or arteriosclerosis. Those with cervical spine problems should not practise postures where the neck is bearing weight. Not to be performed during menstruation or pregnancy.

See the publication *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha* for further details.

Pranayama

- Under no circumstances should the breath be forced. Breathing should always be through the nostrils not the mouth, unless otherwise instructed. Bhastrika pranayama, kapalbhati pranayama, kumbhaka (breath retention): contraindicated in the case of high blood pressure or heart disease.
- *Sheetali/sheetkari pranayama* (cooling/hissing breath): contraindicated in the case of low blood pressure or respiratory problems, e.g. asthma.
- *Nadi shodhana pranayama*: not to be performed during cold, flu or fever. If the nostrils are blocked, the practice can be performed mentally. The practice of nadi shodhana should never be rushed or forced.

Mudra

People with glaucoma should not practise mudras involving gazing of the eyes e.g. shambhavi mudra or nasikagra mudra.

Bandha

Contraindicated in the case of high blood pressure, heart disease or glaucoma.

Other

Introverting practices should not be performed by those suffering from depression e.g. nasikagra drishti, shanmukhi mudra.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS

Shankhaprakshalana or laghoo shankhaprakshalana should be performed in autumn, spring or summer (at the changeover of season) when days are warm and dry. They should not be practised in extreme weather, during monsoon, when it is rainy, windy, too hot or too cold.

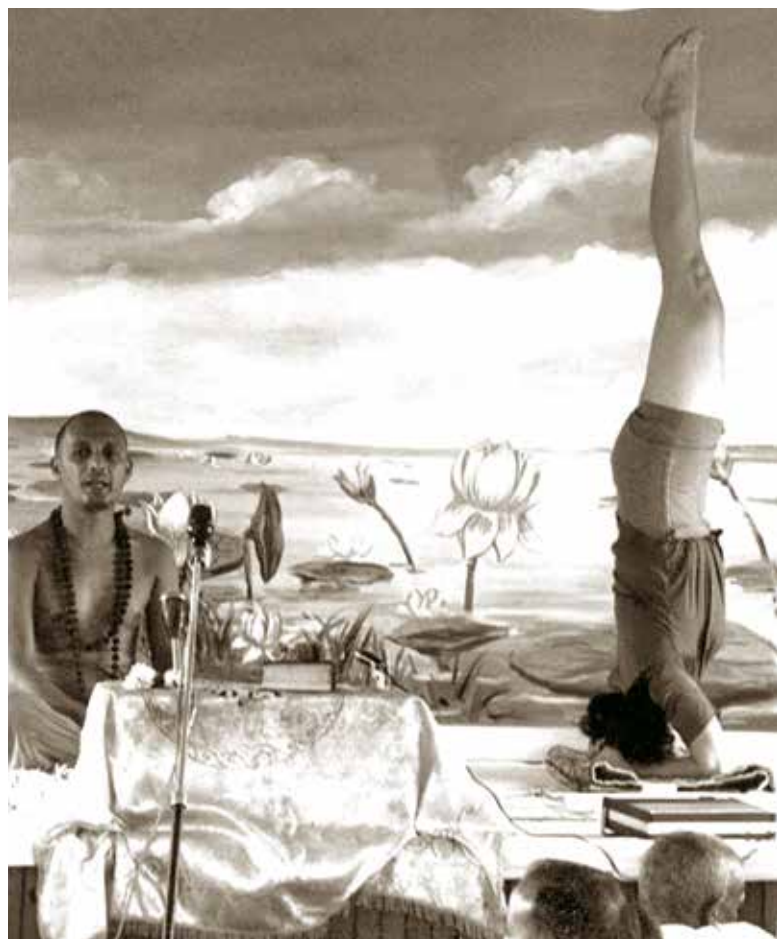
If it is hot outside, the purpose of pranayama is to bring coolness; if it is cold outside, the purpose of pranayama is to create heat. Where the temperature is more moderate, all pranayamas can be practised. From the yogic perspective, it is mainly the balancing pranayamas that are important.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



There should be a harmonious development of all the muscles of the body, the organs, nerves and frame. Some people try to develop the chest and arms only. To develop certain parts of the body at the expense of the rest of the body is irrational and unscientific. General health must be maintained. There must be symmetrical development of all parts of the body. Then only there will be grace, elegance and beauty. Another important point is, there must be no violent exertion.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Always practise on an empty stomach, whether performing asana, pranayama, mudra or bandha. You must be very careful about the rules and precautions for pranayama and the sequence in which any of the hatha yoga techniques are done. Hatha yoga is the science of the body, mind and spirit, and it should be approached as such, and never in a haphazard or careless manner.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



When you are doing an exercise you are not aware of the body or the mental state, but at the time of yoga practice you are aware of the body and the mental state. Yogasanas are not like aerobic or gymnastic exercises to build the body but they are exercises to improve the condition of the body.

For example, if you are doing push-ups and you are doing them to the maximum limit of your body, if you have to do them in the yogic manner you will be combining your breath with each push-up, observing the body, going to its limit and then stopping, not overextending and forcing, but gradually building up, using your breath and mind together, so it won't be a jerky movement. It will be a controlled, guided movement. Yoga is not physical exercise. Yoga is a lifestyle so that physically you remain healthy, mentally you remain peaceful, relaxed and creative, socially you remain connected with everybody, spiritually you remain aware of the goodness in everyone. Therefore, yoga is a way of life.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

6

Indications of Progress

As you practise hatha yoga regularly with seriousness, sincerity and commitment, you will notice changes in yourself at the physical, pranic, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. Below is given a summary of what you may expect to experience or, for those already practising regularly, what you may already have noticed as indicators of your progress.

Shatkarma

Initially when you start with shatkarma you may feel fear, hesitation or lethargy. Signs of progress include:

- Constipation and indigestion are relieved
- Acidity or bitterness is reduced
- There is greater ease in breathing
- Discomfort and pain in the body (muscles, joints, organs) are reduced
- There is a faster healing process when ill
- Body odour and/or bad breath diminishes
- The skin becomes clearer
- There is a growing feeling of courage and confidence
- A feeling of lightness in body, mind and emotions arises.

Asana

- There is increased flexibility and agility
- Greater muscular strength develops

- Energy and stamina increase
- Ease and comfort in the body increase.
- Physical steadiness and the ability to hold the body in one position for a longer period of time develop
- A concentrated mind during practice develops with the ability to hold the awareness on breath, physical movement and visualization.
- There is less mental fluctuation and distraction during practice, and greater ability to direct the awareness at will.
- Harmony between body and mind improve.

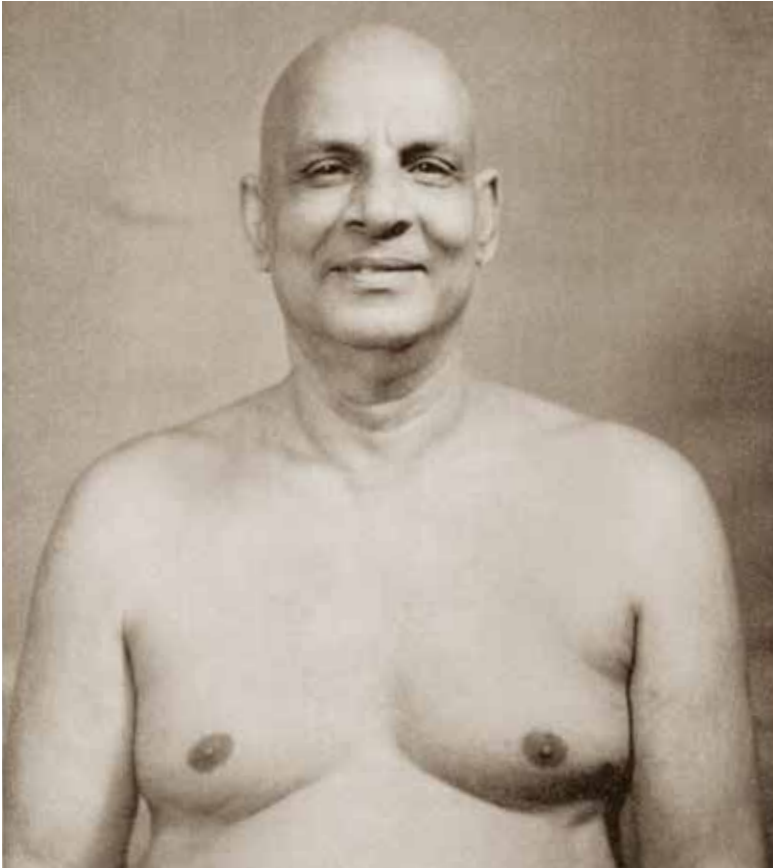
Pranayama

- The breath becomes soundless and smooth
- The level of energy increases
- The ability to withstand heat and cold is greater
- The capacity of the lungs increases, indicated by a longer count in inhalation, exhalation and breath retention without strain.
- Calmness of mind develops, with the ability to stay concentrated on the breath.
- There is balance within body, breath, prana and mind.
- The ability to influence the *swara*, the breathing cycle or flow of breath in the nostrils, and activate ida, pingala and sushumna nadis develops.

Mudra and bandha

- The mind is more concentrated and focused
- There is less distraction by sensory stimulation or pleasure
- Mental steadiness and pranic stillness develop
- There is greater awareness of prana and activation of dormant prana
- The ability to access deeper layers of mind and increased intuitive power
- Strong inner vision, decisiveness, greater willpower and confidence
- The ability to cure any disease can develop.

During the journey of hatha yoga sadhana, past health problems or old habit patterns may resurface. With dedicated and discriminative practice many of these can be resolved, indicating another tangible measure of progress.



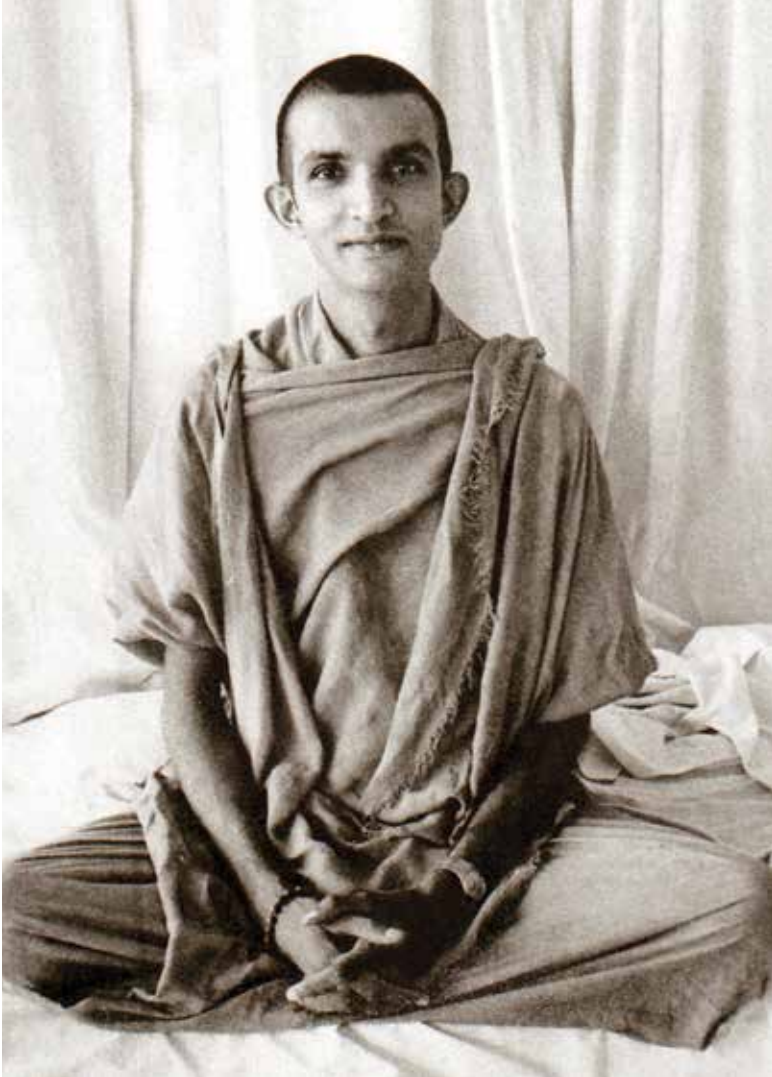
If you cannot perform a particular asana quite satisfactorily do not lose heart. Where there is a will, there is a way. Rome was not built in a day. Try, try, try again. Continuous practice will make you all right.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Just to improve the physical health is not enough; the psychological and psychic framework also has to change.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The aim of hatha yoga is to balance the physical and mental activity, to harmonize the physical movement of prana and the mental experience of prana.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

7

Advice on Lifestyle Adjustments

The following points are given on how to incorporate the sadhana of hatha yoga into your daily life. Suitable adjustments can be made to your existing routine.

The best time to practise asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and shatkarma is early in the morning on waking, ideally at *Brahmamuhurta*, the two hours before and including sunrise. At that time, you may take a cold bath (if the weather is conducive), empty the bowels and commence your practice. After the day's activities and before bed, relaxation and concentration techniques can be incorporated.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Morning

Shatkarma: In the morning start with shatkarma. Danta dhauti for cleansing the teeth, gums, tongue, eyes and ears. This should not take more than 5 minutes. Agnisara kriya can be practised on alternate days.

Asana: a balanced program of asanas can be practised for 20 to 30 minutes based on your capacity and requirements.

Pranayama: can be practised for 10 minutes. The most essential practice is that of nadi shodhana pranayama. This may be followed by *bhramari*, the humming bee breath. If you are short of time before breakfast you may practise pranayama in the mid-morning.

Mudra and bandha: can be practised along with pranayama.

After the day's activities

When you come home after the day's activities and before having dinner and interacting with the family or friends, practise yoga nidra for 25 to 30 minutes to cultivate mental peace and relaxation and for disconnecting from the day's activities. If you have less time, practise the yoga nap which will take no more than 10 to 15 minutes.

Before bed

Practise *trataka*, concentrated gazing, for 5 to 10 minutes to quieten the mind and promote a restful sleep. This can be followed with the techniques of *kaya sthairyam*, *antar mouna* or *ajapa japa*.

WEEKENDS

In the morning take a break from the asana routine and practise the *shatkarma*:

- Jala neti (nasal cleansing), once per week
- Kunjal kriya (regurgitative cleansing), once per fortnight
- Laghoo shankhaprakshalana, once per month under suitable weather conditions
- Shankhaprakshalana, once or twice yearly in a yoga centre or ashram
- Agnisara kriya, alternate days.

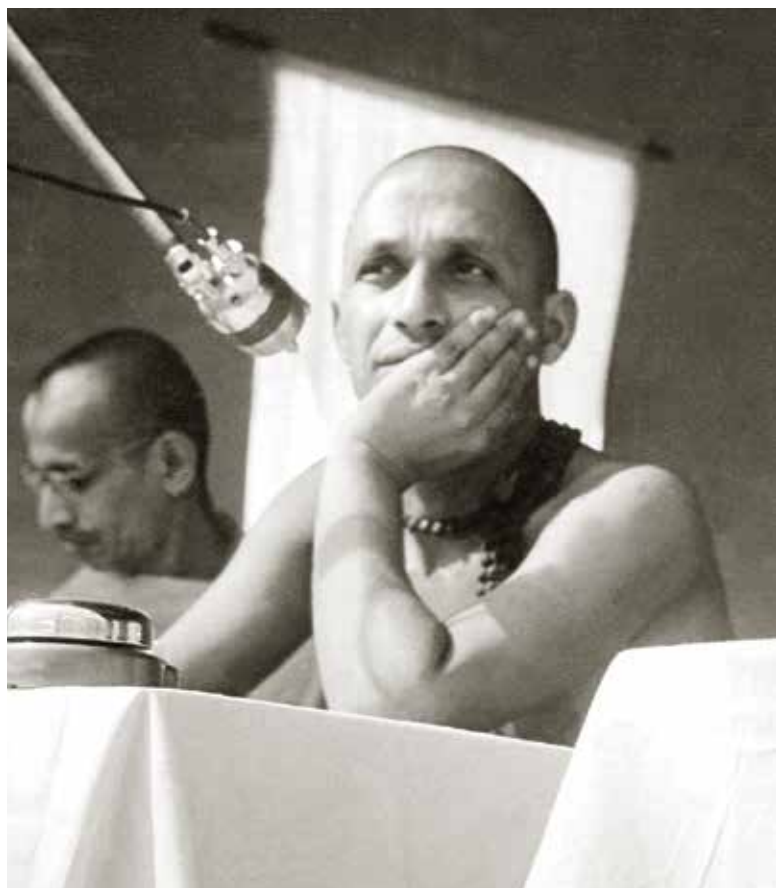
The body and mind thrive on regularity and routine. A regular daily rhythm induces harmony of the physiological systems, inner organs, glands and hormones; therefore, meals should be taken at the same time daily. Food should be fresh, seasonal, not overspiced, and eaten slowly. Similarly, with sleep, an early bedtime helps to ensure that you will gain sufficient sleep to be able to rise a little earlier for your morning *sadhana*.

If you live in a crowded city, try to visit a natural environment once a week where the air and water are clean and pure to give the senses, body, mind and spirit a break. Visit the ashram at least once a year.



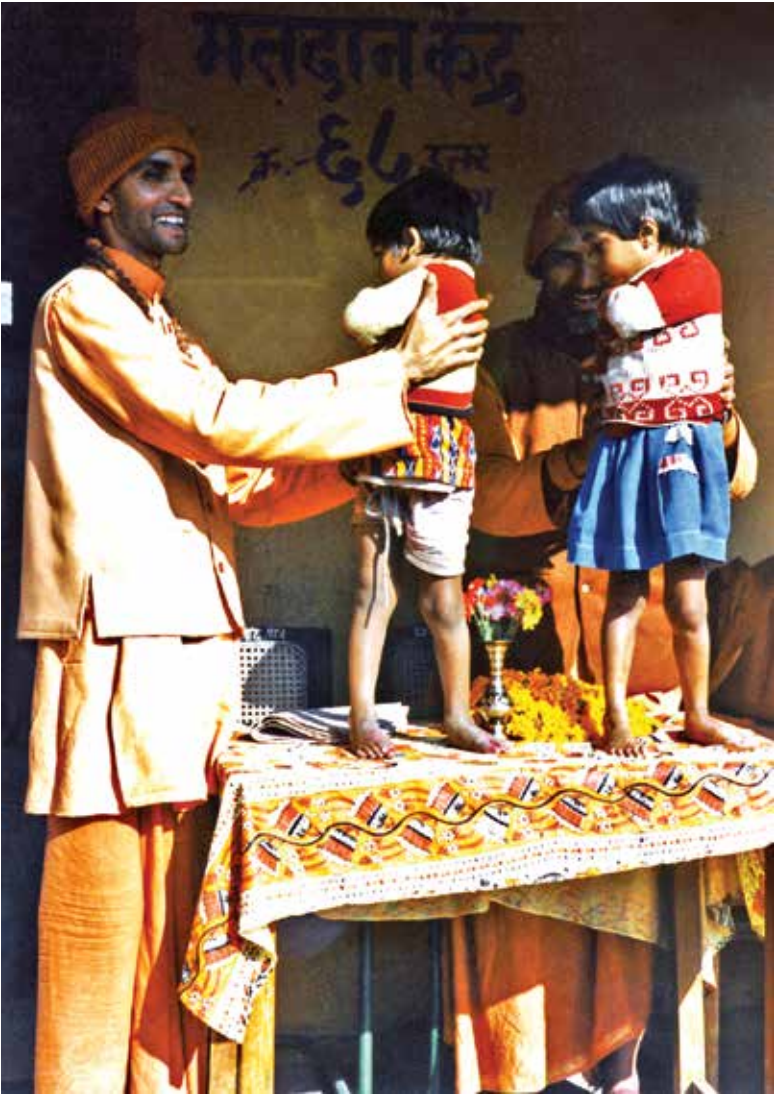
If there is mental fatigue in students due to too much strain and study, if there is mental fatigue in merchants on account of business worries, if there is fatigue in officers on account of overwork, they should take proper rest at once. They should go to the hills or the seaside for a change. They should do pranayama and take a light, wholesome, nutritious diet. They should do japa and kirtan vigorously and practise easy asanas.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Five rounds means five rounds. Does one take a bath ten times a day or eat food the whole day? No, three meals a day gives one enough energy for all activities. In the same way, if yoga is practised for a short time in the morning and evening, it will keep one balanced and consistent throughout the day. Too much yoga too quickly means increasing the will beyond its capacity. Those who try too hard only become exhausted and frustrated. Yoga is not a game of table tennis or cards.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Yoga practices should be done when the time is right. One has to do what is appropriate for one's need – this is common sense yoga.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

8

Yamas and Niyamas

Yamas and niyamas are expressions, behaviours and conditionings to fill your mind with positivity and inspiration. Each branch of yoga has its own set of yamas and niyamas according to the aim and purpose of that yoga. People think of yamas and niyamas as ethical and moral teachings, yet they are the key to allowing you to experience the completeness of yoga and the beauty of life. They represent the emergence of your connection with the positive dimension of your nature and provide an antidote to negativity. They take you in the most positive direction that you can aspire for. Yamas reach inside and change you from within, while niyamas are the external actions that you perform to experience the positive change internally.

In hatha yoga, the yamas and niyamas are introduced after one has attained a reasonable level of purification through shatkarma, asana and pranayama, and when the mind has become stable and its outward-going tendencies are better managed. Therefore, one should begin with the lifestyle yamas and niyamas as given in the introduction 'To Live a Yogic Life'.

They are an integral part of hatha yoga which may seem strange if hatha yoga is taken merely as a physical branch of yoga. However, the aim is to attain balance between the mental force and the life force or vitality, between ida nadi and pingala nadi. From this perspective, the interrelation

between the two nadis is at the core of hatha yoga. There is no separation but connection and mutual influence.

Just think of how you feel after kunjala or laghoo shankaprashtana. The release in the body is reflected in your feeling light, fresh and free. The same is valid for the other limbs of hatha yoga. The physical and pranic movements influence your state of mind. There is a subtle relationship between physical and mental health and strength. The practice of asana leads to firmness and stability of both body and mind. The interrelationship is emphasized and the yamas and niyamas are the connecting bridge. To do *shambhavi mudra* or *nasikagra drishti*, eyebrow or nosetip gazing, the mind has to be reasonably stable, yet at the same time the practice will induce focus and concentration.

The yamas and niyamas work with the mind to facilitate and allow the body to be free of tension. Therefore, it is said that without yama and niyama hatha yoga cannot be perfected. A discontent mind, an unhappy mind, a mind holding on to resentment and unable to forgive is a tense mind. The toxins of mental impurity, limitation and blockage will no doubt find their way into the body and hinder a free flow of movement.

As a hatha yoga aspirant include the practice of yamas and niyamas with sincerity and the understanding of the connection between body and mind. Below is a collection of yamas and niyamas from the hatha yoga scriptures such as *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatharatnavali* and the Yogupanishads by authors who have inspired the books. To begin with, choose the yama and niyama that seem most relevant to you and then slowly, month by month, work through the list. Record your sadhana in your Spiritual Diary and make the necessary adjustments to live the yamas and niyamas spontaneously and with more ease as part of your expression in life.

Hatha yoga yamas

- *Ahimsa*: non-violence
- *Satya*: truth
- *Asteya*: honesty, non-stealing
- *Brahmacharya*: continence; absorbed in a pure state of consciousness
- *Kshama*: forgiveness
- *Dhriti*: endurance
- *Sthairyam*: steadiness
- *Dhairyam*: patience
- *Daya*: compassion
- *Arjavam*: straightforwardness
- *Mitahara*: moderate diet
- *Shaucha*: cleanliness
- *Manahprasad*: happiness
- *Mouna*: keeping silence
- *Indriya nigraha*: restraint of the senses
- *Dakshinyam*: politeness
- *Mardavam*: gentleness
- *Bhava shuddhi*: purity of emotion
- *Smriti*: memory
- *Vairagya*: detachment

Hatha yoga niyamas

- *Tapas*: penance, austerity
- *Santosha*: contentment
- *Astikyam*: belief and faith in a Supreme Person
- *Daanam*: charity
- *Ishwarapoojanam*: worship of God
- *Siddhanta* or *siddhantavakyashravanam*: listening to the recitations of sacred scriptures
- *Hri*: modesty
- *Mati*: discerning intellect
- *Pratyaksha*: acceptance
- *Japa*: mantra repetition
- *Hutam*: internal sacrifice of ego for spiritual experience
- *Snanam*: bathing

- *Homa*: sacrificial fire worship
- *Tarpana*: oblations of water
- *Danti*: self-restraint
- *Titiksha*: endurance
- *Namaskara*: reverential salutations
- *Pradakshinam*: circumambulation
- *Vratopavasakadya*: observance of vows, such as fasting
- *Nirlipta*: non-involvement.

In order to practise the yamas and niyamas, you can take up one pair at a time. For example, practise the pair ahimsa and tapas for fifteen days, then take up the next pair, satya and santosha. To track your progress, you can include them in a spiritual diary (see next section in this book or keep a separate record).





Every step in yoga has to be mastered. Do not take up any higher step before completely mastering the lower step. Gradually ascend the successive stages boldly and cheerfully. This is the right royal road to perfection in yoga.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Seventy-two thousand nadis which carry the computerized impulses throughout the body, and the six hatha yoga body purification techniques, create a psychobiological harmony, and this harmony ultimately creates spontaneity of the positive dharma in us.

I am peaceful within and without, not because I am forcing myself to be, but on account of the great transformation that has taken place in the structure of my psychobiological system. It has become my nature to be non-violent and full of love and understanding. I don't have to practise it, it is my nature. This is how a positive dharma has to be developed in the form of yama and niyama.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



If yoga is taken up for physical problems, there is no doubt that it will help, but that is not all it will do. At the same time as healing the body it will definitely influence the various facets of personality such as the mind, emotions, behaviour and feelings.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

9

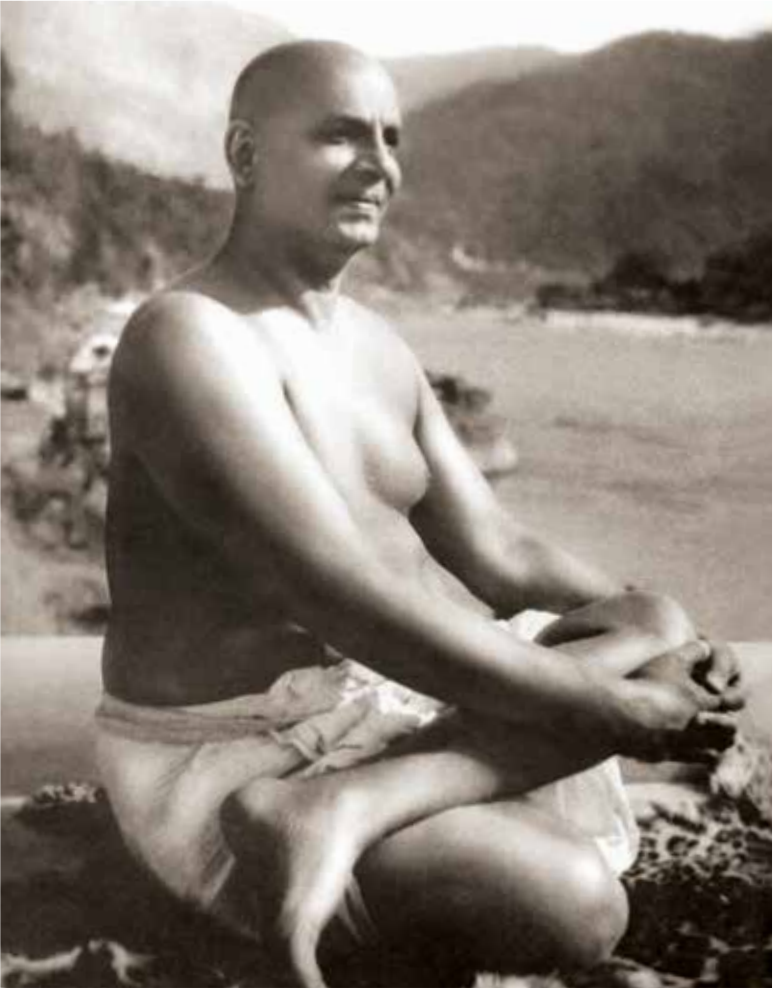
Questions for a Spiritual Diary

The Spiritual Diary is an indispensable tool for those intent on making solid progress in yoga sadhana. It provides a method to track your achievements and strengths, struggles and weaknesses, ambitions and needs on the path. The spiritual diary is like a great friend that you can confide in, it will help you at every step by reflecting back to you where you are succeeding, where you are faltering and where you can improve.

The following list of questions is designed to assist you during hatha yoga sadhana to become aware of patterns, rhythms and cycles that influence you. The questions in the spiritual diary provide a way to track your progress. Review the day before you go to bed at night and use the questions to guide your review.

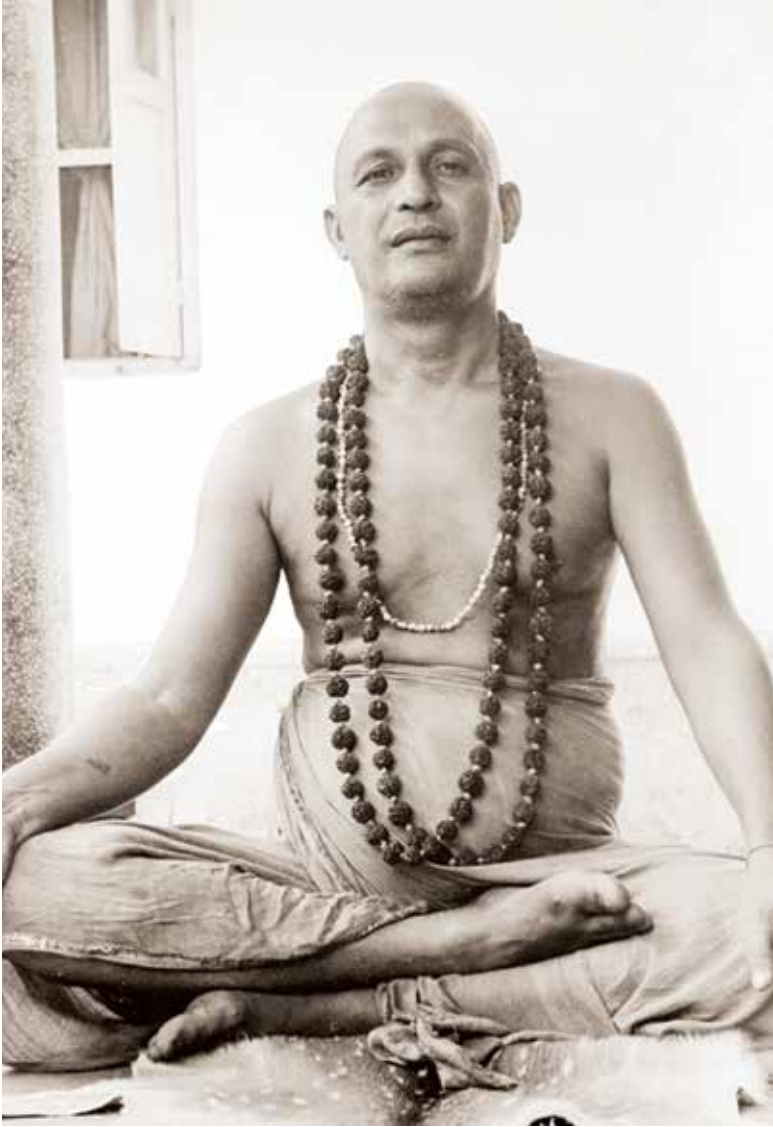
1. How many hours did you sleep last night? Describe the quality of sleep e.g. peaceful, disturbed, restless, unconscious, dreamy, other. Did you wake up feeling fresh, neutral or tired?
2. Was your bowel movement regular? Was there any constipation or diarrhoea?
3. Did you digest your meals easily today or was there any sign of indigestion? Did you over- or under-consume any meal?
4. Were you regular in your meal timings, waking time, sadhana timings, working and resting times? If not, list the cause/s of irregularity.

5. Did your body, living environment and working space feel clean? If not, make a resolution to rectify one item and follow it up with action tomorrow.
6. Which part/s of your body felt strong today? Which part/s of your body felt weak today?
7. On the days you practised sadhana, was there a reduction in any physical aches, pains and feelings of stiffness in the body during the day? If yes, note the part/s of the body affected.
8. Rate your general energy level today on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=no energy, 10=full energy). Use three words to describe the quality of your energy today.
9. Did you feel a balance between extroversion and introversion?
If you answered no: Did you feel more extroverted and physically active? Did you feel more introverted, creative, reflective?
10. List any notable experiences, observations or learnings during your sadhana today.
Shatkarma:
Asana:
Pranayama:
Mudra:
Bandha:
Pratyahara:
Also review the pair of yama and niyama you are working on. Were you able to remember them during the day? You may keep a separate record of your awareness, experience and expression of the yamas and niyamas.



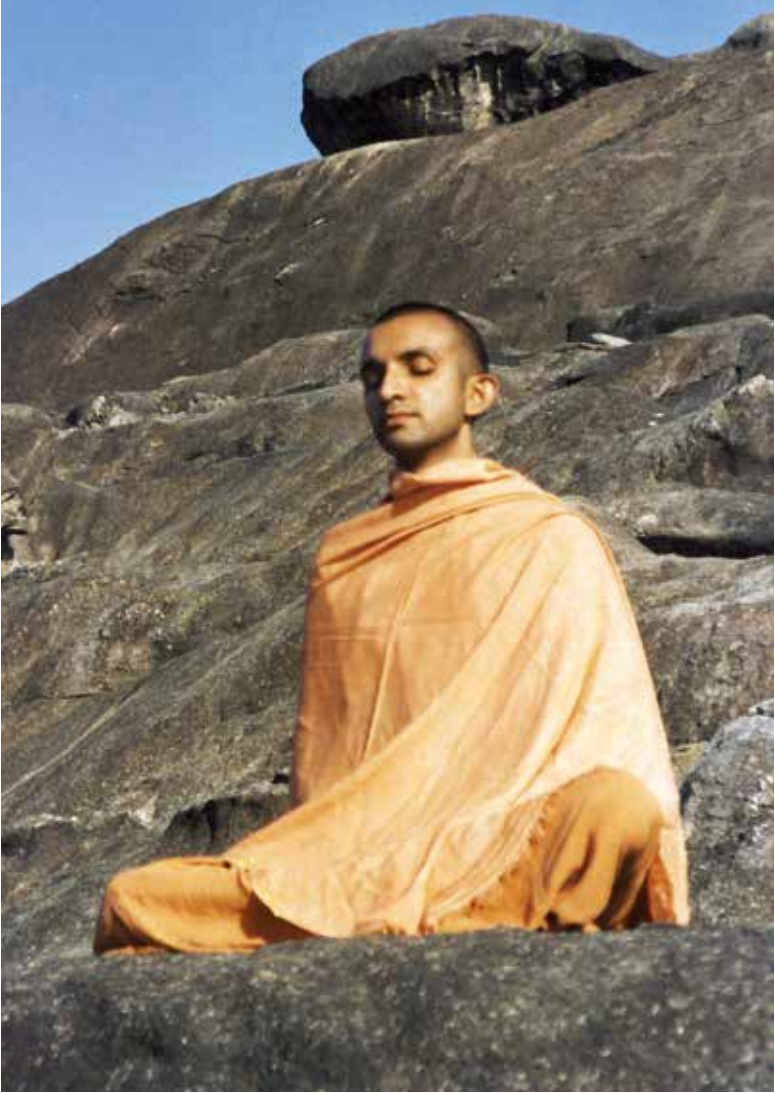
To obtain full vigour and vitality you must have sincerity, earnestness and faith. You must proceed cautiously, step by step. Over-exertion should be avoided. The yogic practices will give you success if you observe *mouna* and *mitahara*, measured speech and moderation, if you practise japa and meditation.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



The time has come to understand and transmit the true spirit of hatha yoga.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Hatha yoga is the doorway to yoga as it allows you to accept yourself, to move from the physical self into the subtle realms of your nature.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

10

General Instructions

Before commencing a hatha yoga sadhana, the following points should be understood. First, the practices and techniques should always be learnt under the guidance of a competent teacher and not learnt from books. Second, if you have a chronic disease or ailment severe enough to warrant medical care, you should consult your doctor about the appropriateness of yoga practice for you.

Guidelines for practice

- Practise on an empty stomach (at least 3 to 4 hours after meals). The best time to practise is *Brahmamuhurta*, the two hours before and including sunrise. At this time the atmosphere is calm and quiet and the mind is not yet engaged with the daily activities.
- Wear loose, light and comfortable clothing. Glasses, jewellery and wristwatches should be removed. Switch off mobile phones. Don't have any digital devices nearby.
- Avoid strain during practice. Work within your own capacity; terminate the practice if excessive pain is felt.

Asana

Anybody can practise asanas. There is no age limit.

- Practise in a well-ventilated room where it is calm and quiet. If you practise outdoors, the surroundings should be pleasant. Do not practise in strong wind, under a

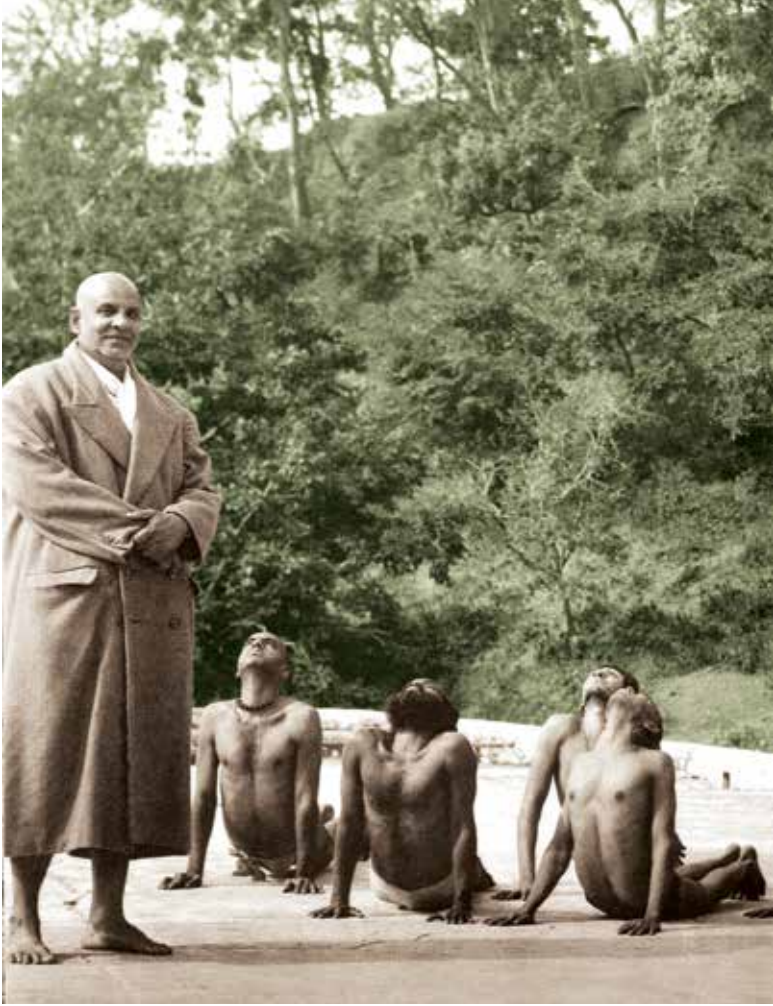
fan, in the cold, in air that is dirty or smoky, or close to anything that prevents freefall to the ground.

- Use a blanket of natural material as this will act as an insulator between the body and the earth. Spongy or air-filled materials do not give sufficient support to the spine.
- Take a cold bath before starting if the weather is conducive. This will invigorate the inner organs, facilitate circulation and improve the effect of the asanas.
- Before practice, the bladder and bowels should be emptied.
- While practising, always breathe through the nose, unless specifically instructed otherwise.
- There are no special dietary rules for asana practice, however it is better to eat a natural balanced diet. In higher stages of practice, a vegetarian diet is recommended.
- At any time that you feel tired, rest in shavasana.
- Counter pose: balance the range of movements in your sadhana. For example, forward bending asanas should be followed by backward bending asanas, and vice versa.

Pranayama

- Practise pranayama in a well-ventilated room that is not too draughty.
- Avoid practising in an air-conditioned room, under a fan or where it is windy.
- Avoid practice in direct sunlight, except at dawn.
- Do not practise during illness, excepting slow abdominal breathing.
- Do not bathe immediately after practice; wait at least 30 minutes.
- Kumbhaka should be performed only for as long as comfortable.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide you with a comfortable and safe foundation for ongoing and progressive practice.



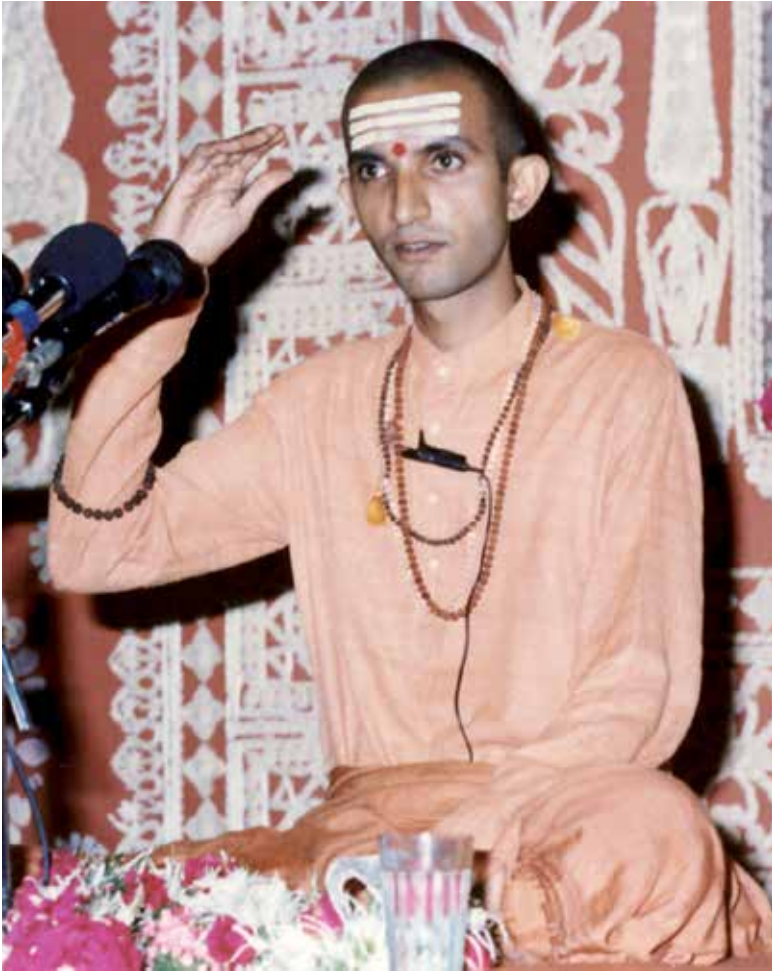
Asanas should be done on empty stomach in the morning or at least three hours after food. Morning time is best for doing asanas. Do not wear spectacles when you do asanas. Be moderate in your diet. Start with minimum time for each asana and then gradually increase the period.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



In the systematic science of hatha yoga, one must first of all prepare the physical body because it is the grossest manifestation of prana. Activate the prana through asana, then practise pranayama to purify the energy channels and to process and balance the prana. Then perform mudras to channel the prana and arouse different faculties of the mind, and bandhas to draw prana upward from the lower centres.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The traditional system of hatha yoga involves several rules which have to be understood and followed. The living conditions and eating habits have to be structured properly by following certain rules. The hatha yoga texts say that if one's environment and habits remain impure, one cannot obtain purity just by practising the prescribed techniques.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Part 2

Sadhana Capsules

To live a balanced life, practices of other yoga branches should be included into your daily routine. If you follow the guidelines given in the introduction, *To Live a Yogic Lifestyle*, you will find elements pertaining to raja yoga, kriya yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. Along with your hatha yoga sadhana capsule, integrate these elements and make the necessary lifestyle adjustments so that your sadhana and day-to-day life will enhance the quality of your being and participation in the world.

The following practices are common to each specific group. For details of the practices see the introduction, *To Live a Yogic Lifestyle*.

Morning – on waking

- 3 mantra sadhana
- Before breakfast: asana, pranayama

Any time during the day

- Yoga nidra
- Antar mouna

Before bed

- Ajapa japa
- Review of the Day
- Spiritual Diary

11

School Children (8 to 12 years)

Children in the age group 8 to 12 are moving from the sphere of carefree childhood into pre-adolescence, with the onset of hormonal change. In ancient times, the seers and sages devised methods to maintain the innocence of the child for some time more and to allow for a more balanced hormonal development.

Surya namaskara, nadi shodhana pranayama and the chanting of the Gayatri mantra were the practices given to children at the age of seven or eight. These practices covered the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development to embed the ideal samskaras.

A childhood filled with laughter, play and fun cannot be taken for granted any more. The world many children have to face is one of broken families, insecurity and aggression within society, wars and destruction of the natural environment. Therefore, they need to be given positive alternatives and the ability to connect to peace within themselves and to create harmony around them. Yoga is such an alternative. Children around the globe take to yoga in a natural, spontaneous and open manner. They feel the benefits and are ready to embrace the opportunity to be children again with optimism, hope and the understanding of the goodness and beauty that life has in store.

To keep children interested, use appropriate instructions. For example, arch the back like a cat, walk like a crow, fly like a butterfly and ride your bicycle to school.

Needs of school children

- Physical resilience
- Trust in themselves, others and life
- Creative and constructive alternatives to the digital and cyber worlds
- A secure base from which to expand and connect with a greater social circle
- Support in difficulties, while allowing space for growth
- Appropriate information and guidance regarding sexual conduct
- Parental (or guardian) awareness of suitability/influence of peer groups
- Encouragement and appreciation.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Asana, pranayama and introduction to shatkarma can be practised to cultivate physical, mental and hormonal balance. As children of this age group are growing at a rapid rate, to keep their bodies strong and flexible the following asana can be practised.

Morning, before breakfast

- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday and Friday:*
Tadasana x 7
Tiryak tadasana x 7
Kati chakrasana x 7
Pawanmuktasana part 2 (cycling) x 7
Marjari asana
Shashankasana x 3 and resting in the pose
Kauva chalasana
Eka pada pranamasana x 2

- Asana – *Tuesday and Thursday*:
Surya namaskara x 3
Druta utkatasana x 7
Dwiconasana x 5
Eka padasana x 2
Titili asana
Shashankbhujangasana x 3
Simhagarjanasana (the roaring lion with shambhavi mudra) x 3
- Pranayama – *Monday to Friday*, after asanas:
Nadi shodhana pranayama (1:1 ratio) 3 to 5 rounds
Bhramari x 7
- Shatkarma – *at the weekend*: Jala neti is important for this age group to keep the pineal gland active. It is also practised for improving vision, maintaining healthy ears, nose, throat; improving the quality of breath and thereby brain function; removing mucus and calming the mind.
Precaution: take extra care that children do not swallow the water.
- Trataka, *5 minutes before bed*, using a candle flame or a dot or the word JOY

Lifestyle adjustments

- Regularity in times of waking and sleeping and meal-times.
- Fasting from digital media at mealtimes and one to two hours before bedtime
- Connecting with nature
- Gratitude for all that one has.

Complementary practices from raja yoga and bhakti yoga

Raja yoga

- *After school*: Power nap of 10 minutes with a rapid rotation of consciousness and the cultivation of a simple sankalpa such as:
I learn easily.
I am healthy and strong.

I live in a beautiful world.

- Additional practices for developing and enhancing memory:

Game: Place a few objects on a plate. Look at them for a minute. Remove the plate. Draw them from memory. Add more objects over time.

Colouring of yantras and mandalas (see *Yantra Colouring* book, Yoga Publications Trust) and drawing of simple mandalas.

Bhakti yoga

- Kirtan with family and friends
- Helping a friend or a neighbour once or twice a week
- Chanting of the Gayatri mantra before sleep eleven times
- Tree puja.





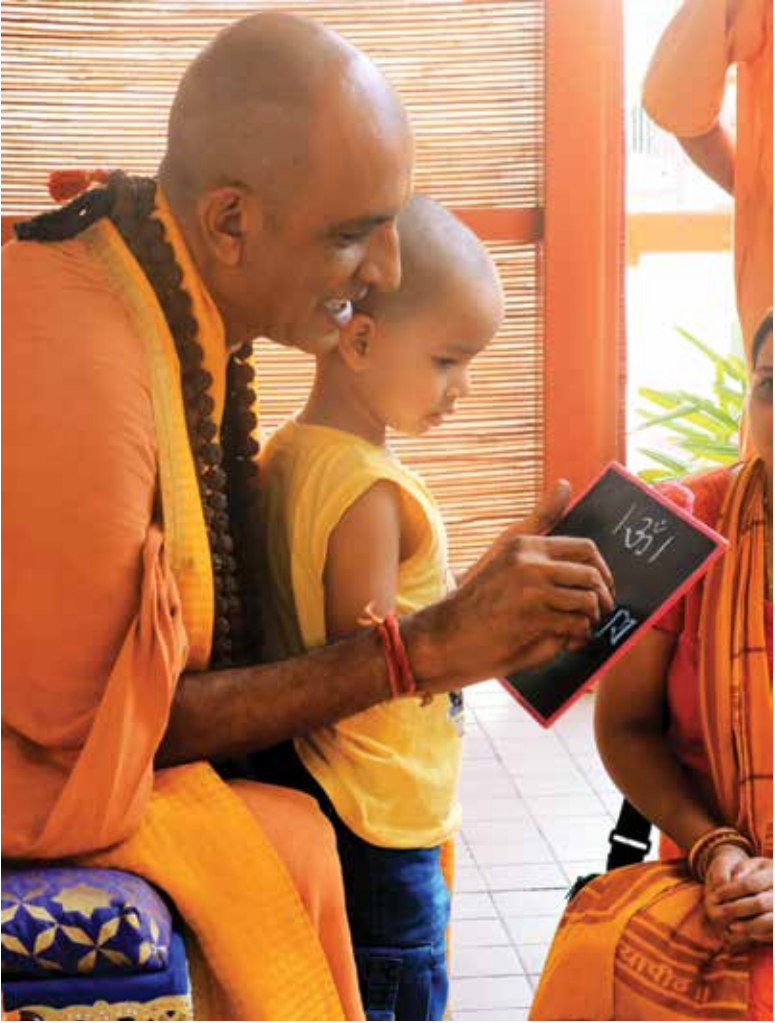
Give the child a good measure of freedom. Provide him with the material which will best enable him to feel and experience his nascent aptitudes and faculties.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Children do imbibe the spiritual qualities and it is not necessary that you give them lessons on yoga, lessons on spiritual life. Give them the yogic atmosphere.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Education is a system through which children learn proper expression in life. It can even be called a science of behaviour, a science of performing creatively and constructively in life, a process of learning how to live. This is the yogic concept of education.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

12

Teenagers (13 to 18 years)

The aim of hatha yoga sadhana for this age group is to assist and maintain healthy development and balance towards maturation, physical, mental and emotional. Many changes are taking place in the hormonal system and a short regular practice can be of great benefit in maintaining balance and harmony, so the young people are not overwhelmed by their own development or the increasing interaction with the greater world.

Besides the individual's changes in the body, and mental and emotional confusion, the teenager has to deal with academic or professional pressure in a competitive society with limited resources. Friends can turn into rivals, lack of understanding and self-confidence and the inability to communicate often leads to isolation, aggression and addictive behaviour. Adolescence is no doubt a time of transition but need not be a time of despair, loneliness and fear. With this sadhana, positivity, lightness in attitude and fun can be generated.

Needs of teenagers

- Physical wellbeing
- Acceptance of physical changes and changing self-image
- Ability to manage lack or loss of self-identity
- Balance between personal development and social interaction

- Means to manage educational and professional demands
- Regular timings in practices, routines and lifestyle
- Learning to wake up early in the morning and sleep early at night at fixed times.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – GENERAL

Morning, before breakfast

- Shatkarma:
Laghoo shankhaprakshalana and kunjla kriya, once a month
Jala neti, 1 to 3 times per week
- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday, Friday*:
Palming for eyes
Skandha chakra x 10
Pawanmuktasana part 3 (selection) x 10 each
Shashankasana x 5 dynamic and two minutes holding the posture
Tadasana x 10
Tiryak tadasana x 10
Kati chakrasana x 10
Eka pada pranamasana x 2
Surya namaskara x 3
Shavasana
- Asana – *Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday*:
Palming for eyes
Dwikonasana x 3
Surya namaskara x 3
Naukasana x 6
Makarasana for a few minutes
Merudandasana x 3
Matsyasana variation 3
Gomukhasana x 2
Shavasana
- Pranayama – *Monday to Saturday*, after asanas:
Kapalbhati 3 to 5 rounds
Nadi shodhana pranayama (1:1 ratio) 3 to 5 rounds
Bhramari x 7

- Mudra – jnana mudra or chin mudra when sitting quietly

Evening

- Trataka
- Bhramari
- *Om* chanting

Complementary practice from raja yoga

After school or before starting homework:

- Yoga nidra with sankalpa such as:
I express myself with ease and confidence.
I am connected to the natural world.
I am full of joy.
- Visualization:
Visualize yourself the way you want to be: with the friends you want to be with, the grades you want to obtain, the exams you want to pass.
Visualize yourself as an adult, content and happy, regardless of the outcome of your next exams.
Visualize yourself being happy in various situations and with different people.
Visualize yourself enjoying your favourite activities and the tasks you do not like so much.



WEIGHT BALANCE PROGRAM

The hormonal changes taking place in the body can create imbalances of weight gain or loss. Emotional insecurity is another factor behind the lack of weight control. Eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, are common not only among girls but increasingly so among teenage boys. A hatha yoga capsule can balance the digestive system and thereby help regulate body weight.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday, Friday*, 20 to 30 minutes:
Pada sanchalanasana x 3 speeds: slow, medium, fast;
increase slowly to 15 rounds for each speed
Naukasana x 5
Merudandasana x 3
Chakki chalanasana x 10
Natarajasana
Shavasana – Feel the body expanding with each inhalation and relaxing with each exhalation.
- Asana – *Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday*, 20 to 30 minutes:
Druta utkatasana x 5 to 10
Surya namaskara x 3 to 12
Vipareeta karani asana for 1 minute
Eka pada pranamasana/eka padasana
Shavasana
- Pranayama – *Monday to Saturday, after asanas*:
Kapalbhati 3 to 5 rounds
Nadi shodhana (1:1) 5 to 10 rounds
Bhramari x 7

Complementary practice from raja yoga

After school or before starting homework:

- Yoga nidra with sankalpa such as:
I start from where I am (present moment acceptance).
I am content with a simple life.

I am perfect as I am.

- Visualization during yoga nidra:
Visualize your own calm and serene face.
Visualize yourself being engaged in an enjoyable activity alone or with others.

Complementary practice from jnana yoga

In your Review of the Day, include a review of the food eaten throughout the day. Keep a 'food diary'. Be aware of the quantity and quality of your meals and snacks.

Questions you may use or modify according to your situation:

1. How many meals did I eat today?
 2. Did I snack between meals?
 3. Did I feel appreciation and gratitude for my food?
 4. Did I practise digital fasting during meals?
 5. How aware was I while eating?
 6. Was I aware of particular emotions which increased my happiness, tiredness, loneliness?
 7. Did I enjoy my food?
 8. Did I make healthy eating choices?
 9. Did I eat alone or with others?
 10. How much of my thoughts were preoccupied with food?
- Other activities: Choose an enjoyable and physical activity, such as dancing, walking, swimming or any sport.



BULLYING

Hatha yoga practices may help to counteract bullying: the teenager who is acting out in this fashion and the one who is being bullied. It helps develop an understanding of the needs of both parties as they both suffer from feelings of insecurity, jealousy and being unloved. Therefore, cultivating feelings of love, self-acceptance and self-esteem is important. Practising asana which relate to anahata and manipura chakras with awareness on the chakras will help connect teenagers to these positive qualities inherent in them.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – FOR THE BULLY

- Asana:
 - Padotthanasana x 10
 - Naukasana x 5
 - Makarasana resting for some time
 - Vyaghrasana x 10
 - Shashankasana x 5 and resting for one minute
 - Hasta baddha utthanasana x 10
 - Akarna dhanurasana x 5
 - Dwikonasana x 5
 - Natarajasana x 2
 - Surya namaskara x 3
- Pranayama:
 - Nadi shodhana (1:1)
 - Bhramari x 10
- Mudra: hridaya mudra and shanti mudra
- Yoga nidra with sankalpa such as:
 - I treat everyone with respect.
 - I am friendly to all.
 - I accept others as they are.
 - I am loved and able to love.
 - I am kind and caring.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – FOR THE ONE BEING BULLIED

For the one being bullied the need is to develop courage, balance, self-worth, self-esteem and to experience joy, and above all a sense of safety.

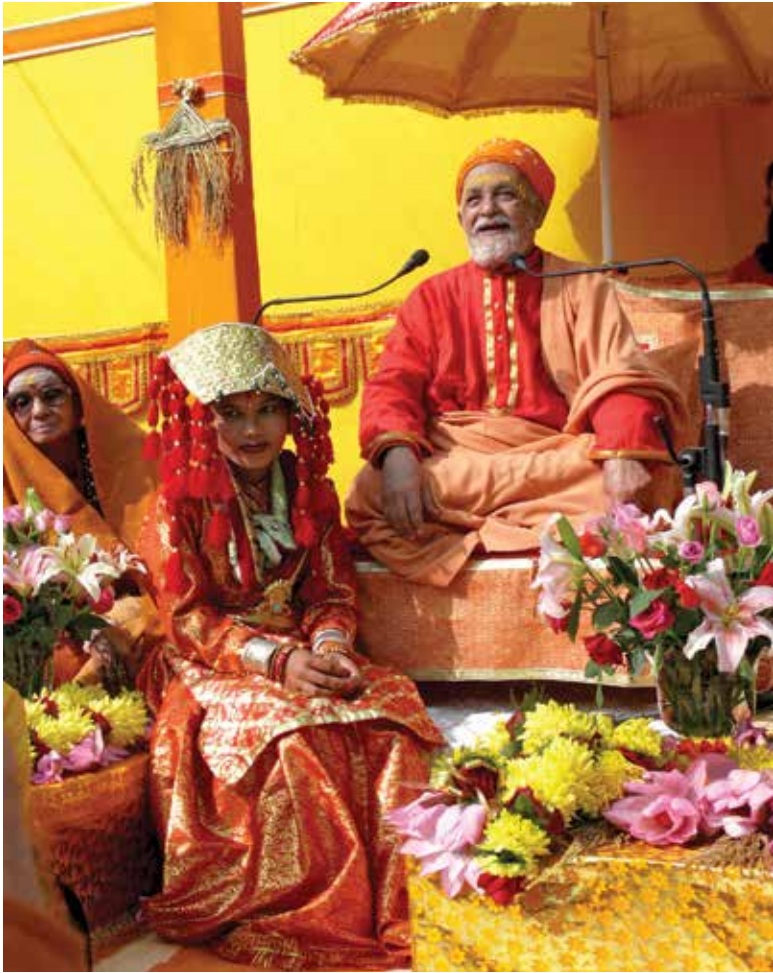
- Asana:
 - Padotthanasana x 10
 - Pada sanchalanasana x 10
 - Naukasana x 10
 - Kashtha takshanasana x 10
 - Druta utkatasana x 10
 - Simhagarjanasana x 10
 - Garudasana x 2
 - Surya namaskara x 3
 - Ushtrasana x 5
 - Shashankasana x 5 dynamic and holding for 1 minute
- Pranayama:
 - Kapalbhati x 3 rounds
 - Nadi shodhana (1:1) 5 to 10 rounds
 - Bhramari x 7
- Yoga nidra with sankalpa such as:
 - I am courageous.
 - I am strong.
 - I am happy.
 - I am loved.
 - I can forgive those who hurt me.
 - I have trust to talk to . . . (someone who loves and helps you)
- Visualization
 - Visualize the bully asking you to be friends with you.
 - Visualize yourself being friends with the bully.
 - Visualize the pain and unhappiness of the bully.
 - Visualize yourself talking to . . .
 - Visualize yourself as strong and confident and playing a leading role in a group activity.



The purpose of true education should be to enlighten humanity, to destroy the lower nature, to better the social order and to promote human wellbeing by training the student both for external achievement and for internal attainment. The test of true education is found in the all-round development of the faculties of knowledge, love and service. There should be a harmonious development of the head, heart and hands.

Youth, the most impressionable period, offers the best opportunities for yogic culture. The inner education, training in character-building and in the practice of yoga has the best effect on a person while still young. When children learn and practise yoga from a young age, they will have a firm spiritual outlook on life, which no one will be able to break or shatter later on.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



You do not have to push your children to practise yoga. The only way that yoga should be interpreted to children is as a method for the enlargement of their perception and awareness. Real education starts when the inner mental potential is awakened and one starts to become aware of the spiritual being. This process of education is called yoga.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Children are independent beings who need their own space in which to develop, and they require your encouragement, support and guidance. They need positive understanding from you.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

13

Students (19 to 25 years)

Students are frequently under a great deal of pressure with their studies and a busy social life. Some are physically active, but for many, a large part of the day is spent sitting, often at the computer or other electronic devices. Hormonal changes and poor eating habits can result in an imbalanced state of body and mind. The attention span can be very short, concentration may be difficult and the young people may suffer from frequent headaches. A hatha yoga program can help students to develop the ability to relax, to maintain physical, mental and emotional balance, and to develop greater concentration for learning without strain.

Needs of the student

- Physical mobility and activity to counter sitting and studying
- Removal of physical, mental and emotional tensions
- Balance of body and mind
- Mental peace and the ability to relax at will
- High level of concentration
- Purification of body and mental patterns
- Balanced growth
- Emotional security
- Discipline and restraint
- Positive interaction with peers and family.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

The aim of this practice program or sadhana is to keep the body and mind purified, balanced and harmonious. The asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas chosen address the needs of students by keeping them physically active, creating balance, improving concentration and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

- Shatkarma:

Laghoo shankhaprakshalana and kunjla kriya: practised once a month for regulating digestive functions, eliminating toxins and releasing emotions.

Jala neti: practised 3 times per week for improving vision, maintaining healthy ears, nose, throat; improving the quality of breath and thereby brain function; removing mucus and calming the mind.

Kapalbhati: practised daily for revitalizing the brain.

After taking a bath and emptying the bowels:

- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday, Friday:*

Palming for eyes

Tadasana x 10

Tiryak tadasana x 10

Kati chakrasana x 10

Akarna dhanurasana x 5

Surya namaskara x 4

Shavasana

- Asana – *Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday:*

Palming for eyes

Surya namaskara x 4

Naukasana x 6

Makarasana

Merudandasana x 3 to 5

Vipareeta karani asana

Matsyasana variation 3

Shava udarakarshanasana (held for 5 abdominal breaths on each side)

Shavasana

- Pranayama – *Monday to Saturday*, after asana:
Kapalbhati x 3
Nadi shodhana (1:1) x 5
Bhramari x 7
- Mudra: Jnana mudra or chin mudra when practising pranayama and sitting quietly.
- Concentration: Trataka (10 minutes, before bed) using a candle flame. Can be practised daily or 2 to 3 times a week.





Education is training in the art of living. It is not a filling-in of something from outside, but a process of drawing out all the positive potentialities, all the highest and best qualities inherent in the student.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Young people must have contact with yoga. They will attain peace through yoga and spread it throughout the world. For the children of today and the civilization of tomorrow, yoga is an epoch-making philosophy.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Think of yoga as a way to improve and develop the strength and quality of the brain and the mind. Then you will have a successful life all the way from your studies to your future life. This is the message of yoga for all of you – practise yoga with such determination and dedication that it becomes a habit in your life.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

14

Adult Wellbeing

Adults juggle the demands of family life, friends, work, profession, social life and adapting to community values. Adults often lead active and busy lives, taking on multiple responsibilities. Frequently they do not have much personal time due to external demands and the requirements of daily life. However, they also need to maintain their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing to keep up their hectic pace of life. Hatha yoga can help with this.

General needs of adults

- Physical health, agility and flexibility
- Spinal wellbeing
- Correct breathing
- Harmonious function of all bodily systems: digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular, immune, endocrine, excretory and reproductive
- Protection against environmental conditions: toxins, pollution, chemicals, stress
- Energy and willpower
- Mental balance, peace and relaxation
- A way to balance outer demands with inner needs, responsibility with fulfilment
- Being part of a larger society
- Harmonious interactions.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

- Shatkarma – *after bathing and emptying the bowels*, 5 minutes: The five minor danta dhautis for tongue, gums, eyes, ears and sinuses. Agnisara kriya, on alternate days.
- Asana – *Monday to Friday*, 20 minutes:
 - Tadasana x 10
 - Tiryak tadasana x 10
 - Kati chakrasana x 10
 - Surya namaskara, 3 to 12 rounds
 - Trikonasana series
 - Eka pada pranamasana
 - Shavasana
 - (NB: Every six months, Pawanmuktasana parts 1, 2, 3 should be practised for one month to retune the body and mind)
- Pranayama – *Monday to Friday*:
 - Kapalbhati x 7
 - Nadi shodhana (1:1) x 7
 - Bhramari x 7
- Trataka – 5 minutes, before bed

On weekends

On Saturday or Sunday take a break from the asana routine and practise the following shatkarmas:

- Jala neti
- Kunjal kriya, once a fortnight
- Laghoo shankhprakashalana, once a month
- Shankhprakashalana, once or twice yearly in a yoga centre or ashram.



The body and mind are instruments which the practice of hatha yoga keeps sound, strong and full of energy. It is a unique armour of defence to battle the opposing forces in the material and spiritual fields. The hatha yogi seeks to have a body which is as strong as steel, healthy, free from suffering and therefore, long-lived. His lustrous form enjoys the vitality of youth.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



For the individual involved in business, politics and worldly activities, yoga is a dose of relaxation and mental tonic.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Certain practices are very useful for executives and professional workers, whose work is desk-oriented. If they observe the breath and develop sound awareness for five minutes, that will reduce cerebral and nervous tension. If there is too much pressure at work, then bhramari pranayama which stimulates melatonin, will reduce tension, and they will feel more relaxed and peaceful. Nadi shodhana, alternate nostril breathing, is also useful and can be done mentally without using the hand.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

15

Families

In this present age, families come in many combinations, shapes and sizes. Here we define family simply as a group of people who are nearest and dearest to one another and who live together. The simple yoga program offered is for young people aged 10 to 18 years with parents or elders to help balance out the moods and bring harmony into the home.

Needs of the family

- Time and space with all family members
- Health and wellbeing
- Protection and safety: physical, mental, emotional, social and environmental
- Awareness of the strengths, weaknesses, needs and aims of oneself, the family members and the family unit
- Connection with positivity: strengthening the experience of the family unit to face difficulties and strive to manage together whatever comes in the way, whether sadness or happiness, difficulties or easy moments.
- Permission to allow all physical tensions, emotions and worries to be expressed with the positive intention to return to a feeling of peace, harmony and balance within the family.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

The sadhana is intended to be done by all members together as a family activity.

Morning, before breakfast

- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday, Friday:*
Tadasana x 10
Tiryak tadasana x 10
Kati chakrasana x 10
Eka pada pranamasana x 2
Surya namaskara x 3
Shavasana
- Asana – *Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday:*
Kashtha takshanasana x 5
Nauka sanchalanasana x 6
Makarasana
Simhagarjanasana x 6
Shashank bhujangasana
Shashankasana
Vipareeta karani asana
Shavasana
- Pranayama – *Monday to Saturday:*
Nadi shodhana x 10
Bhramari x 7

Dinner time

- Hatha yoga yamas and niyamas discussed lightly at dinner

Evening time

- Trataka

Complementary practices from bhakti yoga

- Reading inspiring stories together
- Kirtan
- Chanting *Hanuman Chalisa*
- At least one meal a day together

- Time spent together without digital disturbance
- Visit to natural and inspiring places.



I believe that everybody should do asanas regularly. One of the aims of the yoga movement is to popularize the use and the benefits of asana in the daily life of men, women and children.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Your children must be products of your love and understanding and the deep-rooted intimate relationship between mother, father and children. The family must become an ashram, a community of friends, where parents and children live together. They have different roles within the family structure such as husband and wife, brother and sister, parents and children, but are all members of the same family.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Hatha yoga has to be understood not as physical activity, not as the performance of physical postures, but as the realignment of the physical and mental energies.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

16

Traditional Indian Housewife

Indian housewives spend the greatest part of their lives dedicated to serving their families – husbands, children, relatives and extended family. They are engaged in cooking, washing, cleaning, organizing, decorating and making the home a peaceful and comfortable place for all members. They play the role of wife, beloved, mother, friend, confidante, carer, boundary-setter, counsellor and provide a space of warmth, refuge, hope and love.

Aside from this work and her roles, in many cases there is little else in the way of a profession or hobby to nurture all aspects of her experience: physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. She may be living in crowded conditions, having to labour and toil with great energy and receive little credit for her tireless efforts. With a balanced hatha yoga program, these women can protect and nurture their health, vitality and energy and develop greater wellbeing, inner happiness and mental peace to support the great work that they do for others.

Needs of the traditional Indian housewife

- Flexibility, strength and tone of body
- Strengthening and toning of abdomen, pelvis, hips, back
- Vitality and health on all levels
- Immunity and protection
- Self-confidence and self-esteem

- A way to develop mental peace
- Positive connection and happiness
- Connect with the body in a positive way.

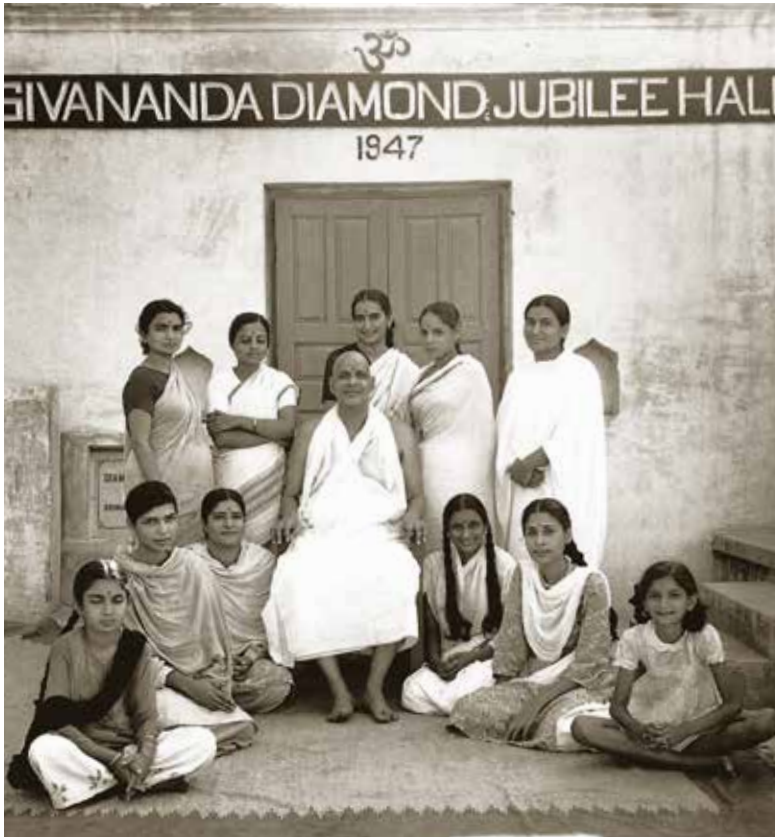
HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Morning, before breakfast

- Shatkarma:
 - Jala neti, once per week (Sundays)
 - Laghoo shankhprakhshalana, once per month (Sundays)
 - Agnisara kriya, alternate days
- Asana – *Monday, Wednesday, Friday*:
 - Tadasana x 10
 - Tiryak tadasana x 10
 - Kati chakrasana x 10
 - Trikonasana series
 - Eka pada pranamasana
 - Surya namaskara
 - Vipareeta karani asana
- Asana – *Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday*:
 - Pawanmuktasana part 1 x 10
 - Chakki chalanasana x 10
 - Namaskarasana x 10
 - Kandharasana x 10
 - Supta udarakarshanasana x 10
- Pranayama – *Monday to Saturday*: Nadi shodhana pranayama (1:1 ratio), with ujjayi pranayama, over time it can be developed with mudras and bandhas;
 - Bhramari
- Mudra and bandha – *Monday to Saturday*:
 - Moola bandha
 - Sahajoli mudra
 - Hridaya mudra (during evening meditation practice)
 - Shambhavi mudra

Evening

- Trataka, daily for 5 minutes in the evening



Ladies should also practise asanas. They will have healthy and strong children. If mothers are healthy and strong, children also will be healthy and strong. Regeneration of the young ladies means regeneration of the whole world. If ladies practise a course of asanas systematically with interest and attention, they will have wonderful health and vitality. There is no doubt of this. I hope they will give patient hearing to my earnest and sincere prayer and start practising these yoga lessons. Glory to these new yoga lady students who tread the path of yoga. Children born of yoginis will also be yogis.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati



My personal philosophy is that women are very sincere and obedient. They are honest and hard-working. Woman is one of the finest creatures of the creator and there is no reason why she should be barred from spiritual life. Women are very psychic by nature and we should allow them to raise their consciousness and develop this part of their personality.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



To apply yoga in the home, in your daily routine, the use of capsules of yoga at different times of the day to attain relaxation, awareness and concentration is recommended. The hatha yoga capsules include asana, pranayama and shatkarma. In the morning before breakfast, asana and pranayama should be practised. This capsule takes about half an hour.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

17

Elderly

The elderly, our senior citizens over the age of sixty years have lived long on the planet and experienced the fullness of life. Inevitably, through this fullness of living, the body and mind show signs of wear and tear. Due to the natural ageing process, many elderly people experience reduced mobility and vitality, and increased stiffness and pain. From the viewpoint of ayurveda, this is a time when *vata dosha* (wind/gas/air) is predominant in the body, hence joint pain and stiffness appear in the knees, hips and back. The elderly commonly face a decrease in physical strength, in the ability to balance, in eyesight, memory and hence self-confidence. They may also experience other physical problems such as constipation, incontinence, high blood pressure, diabetes, insomnia and arthritis.

One distinct advantage of this time in life is that the elderly generally have more time available to them. Yoga comes as a panacea that provides positive inputs by filling the mind with optimism and giving the elderly a set of tools that they can use to manage their physical, emotional and mental challenges.

Needs of the elderly

- Increased mobility
- Mental peace and happiness
- Reduction and management of pain

- Positive company and social activity
- Contribution to society.

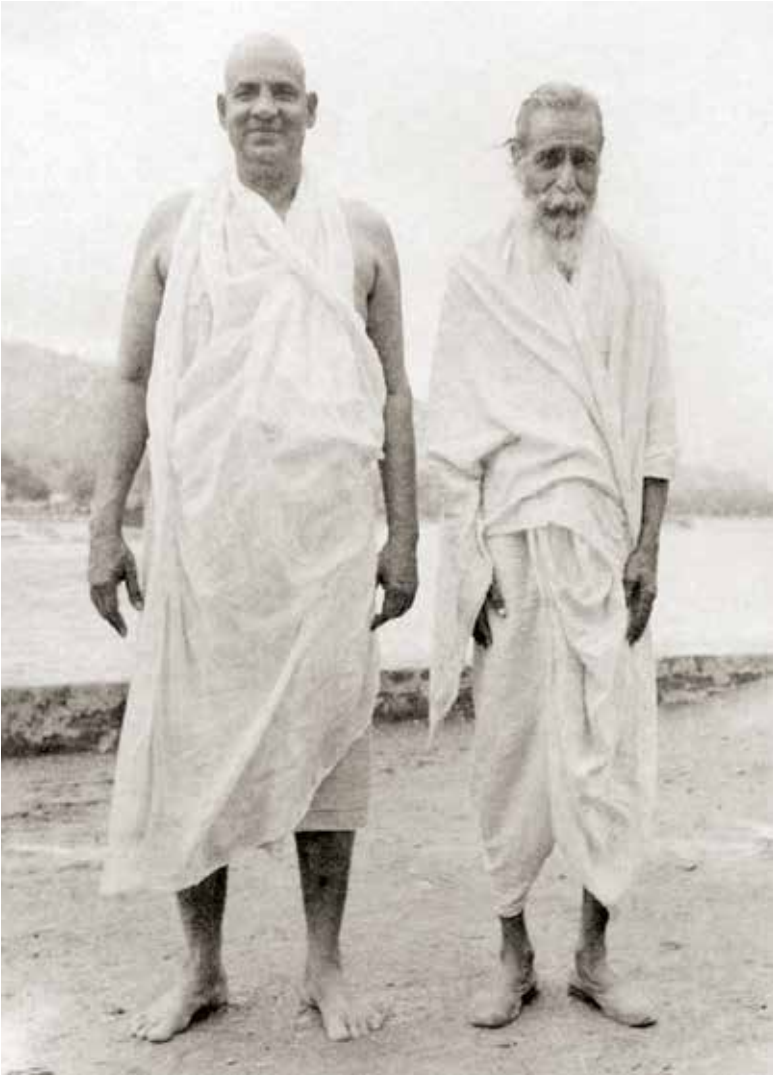
HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Please note: Practices can be done by sitting on chairs, instead of sitting on the floor or standing. Strain should be avoided. Special attention should be paid to any physical ailments.

- Asana:
 - Pawanmuktasana part 1: each asana practised for 10 rounds (awareness: first five rounds on muscular movement and joints; next five rounds on breath and prana)
 - Standing series: to stretch the spine, open the chest and develop balance
 - Tadasana + variation 1
 - Tiryak tadasana
 - Kati chakrasana
 - Baddha hasta utthanasana
- Pranayama:
 - Shavasana with abdominal breath
 - Nadi shodhana (1:1) x 7
 - Bhramari x 7
- Mudra: Vajroli mudra for men, sahajoli mudra for women x 10.
- Shatkarma: Trataka on alternate evenings, before ajapa japa to improve eyesight and concentration.

Complementary practices from karma yoga

- Karma yoga in community setting to improve self-esteem, creativity, constructive use of time and to create community support and links.



Everyone should select a course of a few exercises in asana, pranayama and meditation according to temperament, capacity, convenience and requirement.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Asanas and pranayamas are universal in their application – they are for everyone.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



You can practise yoga at any age whether it be 10, 20, 40, 60 or 80, because the practices begin gradually and are simple enough to exercise the different parts of the entire body. Asana is a practice through which you attain awareness of the body, release tension and stress from different joints and muscles and come to a state of relaxation, in which you are physically comfortable in whatever you do.

If, at the age of 60, you are healthy and have no physical problems, illnesses or diseases then the best yoga practices would be the pawanmuktasana part 1 and 2, the shakti bandha techniques and the trikonasana series, which are gentle and provide complete exercise for the physical body.

Ageing is a phenomenon where cellular destruction gradually predominates over the reconstructive process. Yoga sees this as a natural process and does not go against nature. The speed of the degeneration can definitely be slowed down. Regular practice of a balanced set of asanas, pranayamas, relaxation, meditation and cleansing practices are necessary. However, along with these practices, a regulated lifestyle is a must.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

18

Sadhakas

There are four progressive levels of yoga experience, according to one's needs and aspirations:

1. Yoga practice: practising yoga to meet your personal needs for health management and mental peace, according to your own choices. Most people fall into this category. For many practitioners, once they meet their personal needs they drop their yoga practice.
2. Yoga sadhana: pursuing the aim of yoga, as defined by that branch of yoga.
3. Yoga lifestyle: living the principles and practices of yoga.
4. Yoga culture: total immersion in yoga as a way of life, understanding and perception.

Based on this progression of yoga, at the level of yoga sadhana a 'sadhaka' can be defined as one who practises *sadhana*, a sustained practice or discipline performed regularly for the attainment of the aim or goal defined by that branch of yoga. A hatha yoga sadhaka is different from a practitioner who, for example, is practising a few select asanas and pranayamas to reduce back pain or manage asthma. A hatha yoga sadhaka systematically and sequentially follows the hatha yoga system with the aim of attaining and experiencing the balance of ida and pingala to awaken and activate ajna chakra. Likewise, a raja yoga sadhaka follows the system of raja yoga systematically to master each stage to attain the final goal: *chitta vritti nirodhah* – cessation of

the inner modifications of consciousness. In contrast to the sadhaka, a practitioner of raja yoga uses the techniques for reducing stress and for a bit of mental peace and relaxation. To be a sadhaka requires a greater degree of seriousness, sincerity and commitment to yoga.

Needs of the sadhaka

- Competent guidance
- Environment allowing for intensive hatha yoga sadhana
- Balance between professional, family and social life and sadhana.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Note: The following program should be undertaken under the guidance of a competent teacher, so that the various practices can be divided into an appropriate sequence, and not all done on a daily basis.

- Shatkarma:
 - Neti, daily
 - Kunjali kriya, once per week
 - Laghuo shankhaprakshalana, once per month
 - Purna shankhaprakshalana, once or twice per year
 - Kapalbhati, daily
 - Agnisara kriya, daily
- Asana: Awareness should be taken progressively from physical movement, to breath and prana, to visualization, to chakra and mantra during practice.
 - Tadasana x 10
 - Tiryak tadasana x 10
 - Kati chakrasana x 10
 - Surya namaskara x 6 to 12 (taking awareness through *pancha kosha*, the five sheaths of existence)
 - Eka pada pranamasana or garudasana (awareness on niyama: *indriya nigraha*, restrain and control of the senses)
 - Bhujangasana x 10
 - Paschimottanasana

Mayurasana, held 2 to 5 minutes

Supta vajrasana, 2 minutes

Hasta baddha utthanasana x 25

Namaskarasana x 25

Vipareeta karani asana

- Pranayama:

Nadi shodhana x 27 rounds with *Gayatri* mantra, kumbhaka, mudra and bandha

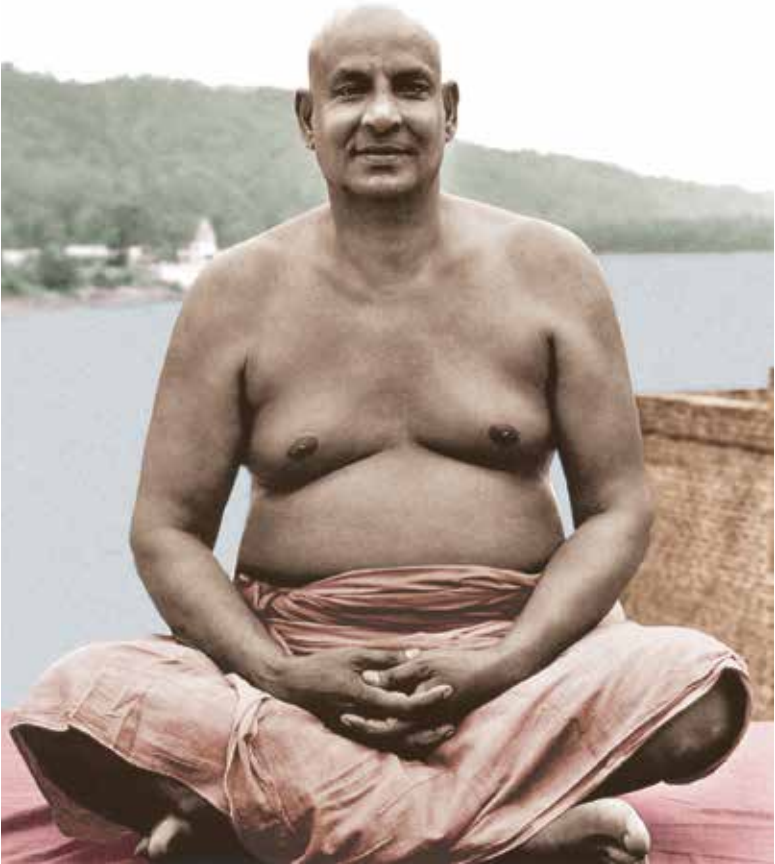
Bhramari pranayama with shambhavi mudra x 27 rounds

Ujjayi with khechari mudra, 5 minutes

Bhastrika and kapalbhati, 5 rounds, include kumbhaka, mudra and bandha. When the weather is cold, such as during winter, you can increase the number of rounds to 10

Sheetali/sheetkari, 10 to 15 rounds in summer.





The ideal for the sadhaka is to secure a place, a hut, where he will not be disturbed by too many people, animals, insects, and where nature would favour his practice. It is not always possible to have such an ideal place for practising yoga. The basic principles should be borne in mind. Peaceful atmosphere, solitude, freedom from distraction – if these are ensured you can convert your own room into an ideal hut for the practice of yoga.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



To transcend the body does not mean to just forget about it. You have to purify it first. Therefore, the six kriyas of hatha yoga are necessary for spiritual aspirants.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



If one takes up yogasanas for whatever reason, whether it is physical, mental or spiritual, a system must be followed. This allows for the development of a harmonious and well-balanced physiological and psychological structure.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

19

Sportspeople

Sportspeople could be considered as those who take part in sports more seriously and with a competitive focus. They are subject to long hours of training, a great deal of physical movement, high personal aims and a competitive environment. Sportspeople repeatedly push the limits of the body, even to the point of pain. They often have to manage excessive hormonal secretions, aggression, injuries, disproportionate development and intense pressure.

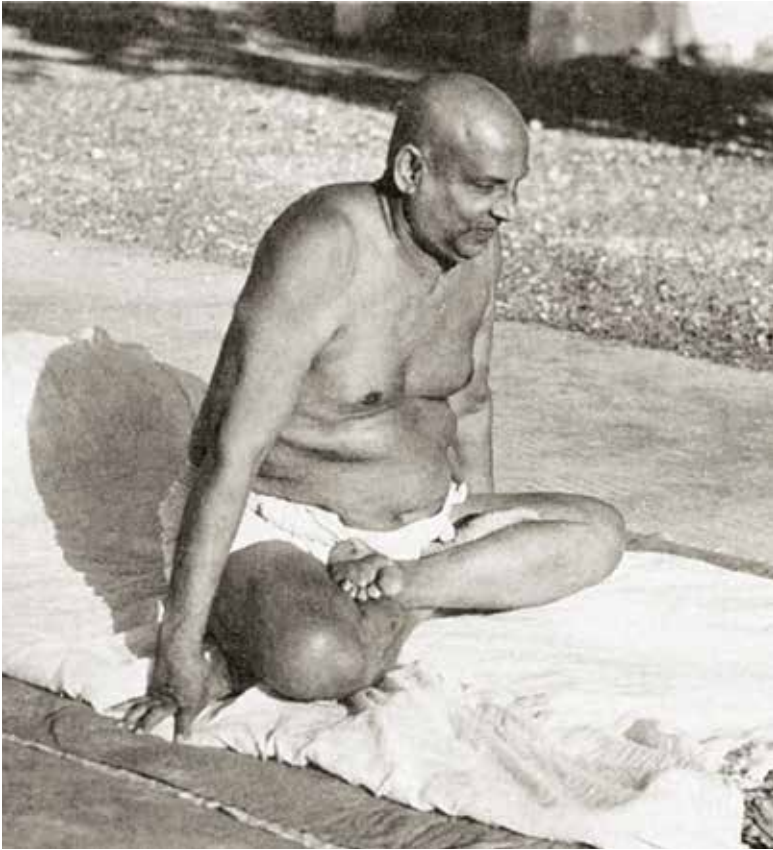
A hatha yoga sadhana can help to balance the extremity of these conditions, since during yogic practices one learns to recognize and respect the limitations of the body. Hatha yoga can help sportspeople by supporting their health, wellbeing, mental and emotional balance and ability to heal from injury.

Needs of sportspeople

- Speed, skill, strength, stamina, flexibility
- Balance and counterbalance to overused muscles
- Injury prevention
- Awareness of the breathing process
- Increased quantity of prana, due to a large output
- Fast regeneration of cells and tissue
- Deep relaxation: physical, mental, emotional
- Inner discipline, willpower, focus and determination
- Concentration
- Balanced diet and lifestyle.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

- Shatkarma:
Jala neti, practised on alternate days
Kunjla kriya, once per fortnight to reduce fear of failure and induce courage
Laghuo shankhprakashana, once per month for cleansing the digestive system
- Asana – Focus on physical movement, breath coordination and visualization of perfect practice:
Tadasana x 10, variation 2, x 2
Trikonasana, variation 2, x 6
Tiryak kati chakrasana x 6
Utthita hasta padangusthasana, variation 2, x 1
Surya namaskara x 5
Dhanurasana x 5 or supta vajrasana
Naman pranamasana x 3
Druta halasana x 6
Naukasana x 6
Shava udarakarshanasana (held for 7 abdominal breaths)
Shavasana with abdominal breathing x 10, yogic breath x 10
- Pranayama and bandha:
Bhastrika technique 4 (bahir and antar kumbhaka), 30 breaths x 3 rounds with maha bandha – this practice needs to be developed systematically over a long period of time
Nadi shodhana, technique 3 (antar kumbhaka), stage 1, (1:1:1)
Bhramari x 7
- Mudra: Shambhavi mudra x 10 to calm the mind and emotions, develop one-pointedness, and increase awareness, intuitive knowledge and discrimination.



All asanas should be done invariably in the morning, and not in the evening. The reason for this emphasis is that in the evening everybody is tired after a day's work and as such will not be able to do the various exercises with a feeling of exhilaration and freshness which he or she would otherwise feel in the morning. There should absolutely be no feeling of depression or fatigue either before or during the performance of these exercises. This is an important point to remember, if you wish to enjoy the benefits of these exercises in the fullest measure.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Practise any pranayama, applying the bandhas and you will find that you do not have to try to concentrate the mind, because when the prana, the life force, is balanced throughout the body, then tranquillity and equipoise become natural; the heart, respiration, glandular secretions and responses of the nervous system synchronize. Then the physiological cooperation of the body is with you.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Yoga has been accepted by various sports authorities as a preliminary program for athletes, such as archery, volleyball and shooting. Even sports like mountain climbing have applied yoga in their training programs to assist in the adjustment to high altitude atmospheres.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Part 3

Specific Conditions

For details of practices common to each condition, see the introduction, *To Live a Yogic Lifestyle*.

20

Total Wellbeing

Through simple yogic adjustments to the daily routine, one can possess wonderful health and wellbeing of body, mind and spirit. Total wellbeing is a state of optimum physical, mental and emotional health that is reflected in a strong digestive system, thorough elimination of wastes, sound and refreshing sleep, clear bright eyes, muscular tone and flexibility. A healthy person has a robust cardiovascular system and an immune system that provides protection against disease and speedy recovery from injury. Total health manifests through the absence of disease and discomforts such as constipation, indigestion, difficulties in breathing, painful joints and muscular aches and pains.

In yoga it is said that disease originates in the mind. Many diseases – aside from those that are clearly physical, such as a parasite infection – are thus psychosomatic. Yogic techniques purify both the body and the mind and thereby positively influence overall health.

Yogic methods of relaxation and concentration develop self-awareness leading to self-understanding. Even a basic understanding of your inner life – emotions, feelings, sentiments, thoughts, visions, desires and dreams – helps you to attain sound mental and emotional wellbeing. By understanding the mind, you can adjust your thinking and lifestyle choices, and reverse the effects of any destructive lifestyle habits.

Multiple lifestyle factors lead to ill-health, including overeating or eating highly-processed foods rather than fresh wholefoods, insufficient physical exercise, irregular or haphazard lifestyle, inadequate sleep and rest, late nights, overworking and overthinking, stress, worry, and inner and outer conflict.

To cultivate total wellbeing, it is necessary to address the whole person: body, mind and spirit. Yoga says that you are not only this body, but are composed of five different layers: the physical body or *annamaya kosha*; the body composed of vital life energy or *pranamaya kosha*; the mental body or *manomaya kosha*; a level of consciousness and deep wisdom or *vijnanamaya kosha*; and the bliss body or *anandamaya kosha*. The practices, techniques, lifestyle and culture of yoga activate and awaken these five levels of human experience. Practised regularly, asana, pranayama, mantra, relaxation and concentration techniques can help you to acquire total health and wellbeing over the course of your lifetime. The total wellbeing capsule below is a general sadhana for those who want to maintain or improve their existing state of health and wellbeing.

Signs and symptoms of total wellbeing



Health is that condition in which one has good digestion, good appetite, normal breathing and pulse, good quantity and quality of blood, strong nerves and a calm mind. A sound mind in a sound body, free movement of the bowels, a normal state of urine, rosy cheeks, a shining face and sparkling eyes are signs of good health.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Morning, before breakfast

- Tadasana
- Tiryak tadasana
- Kati chakrasana
- Surya namaskara
- Nadi shodhana pranayama
- Bhramari pranayama

Afternoon or evening

- Yoga nidra

At night before bed

- Bhramari
- Japa

Lifestyle adjustments

- Regularity: Let there be a proper time for everything, for sadhana, meals, work, recreation and sleep; avoid whimsical living.
- Spontaneity and application of wisdom: Regularity should not translate into rigidity. Let there also be a flow and the ability to adapt, adjust and accommodate as the need arises.
- Take care of your physical, mental and spiritual aspirations and needs.
- Balance the time you spend for yourself and time for others.
- Develop the head, heart and hands.
- Create a healthy environment within you through a healthy diet and a positive attitude.
- Create a healthy environment around you by respecting the laws of nature.
- Live and express the yamas and niyamas with faith and conviction.

Complementary practices from raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Raja yoga

- Develop awareness throughout the day, not only during your hatha yoga practice.

Karma yoga

- Do all your actions as if for the first and last time
- Always try to do your best

Bhakti yoga

- Connect with others in a positive, healthy way through kirtan.
- Seek positive input, through people, films, music as a form of satsang.
- Connect to nature.

Jnana yoga

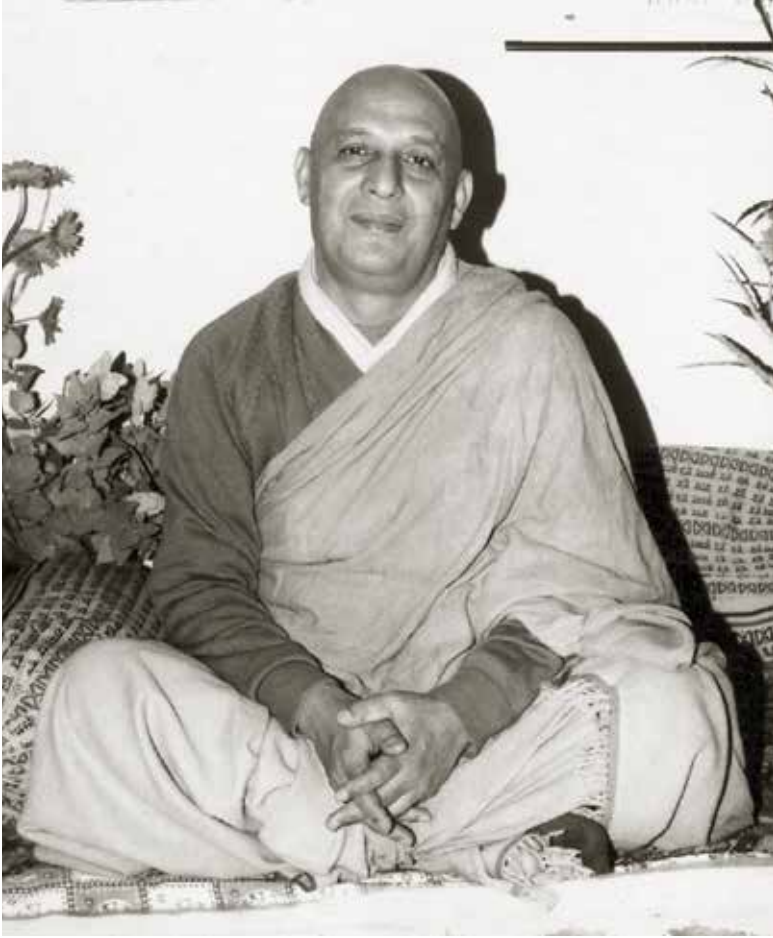
- Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:
 1. What did I do to maintain wellbeing?
 2. What did I do that was detrimental to my wellbeing?
 3. In what ways did I become aware of the relationship between physical and mental wellbeing?
 4. What resolve do I make to maintain and enhance my wellbeing?
 5. What can I do to inspire others to attain total wellbeing?





The body and mind are instruments which the practice of hatha yoga keeps sound, strong and full of energy. It is a unique armour of defence to battle the opposing forces in the material and spiritual fields. The hatha yogi seeks to have a body which is as strong as steel, healthy, free from suffering and therefore, long-lived. The master of the body is the master of both life and death. His lustrous form enjoys the vitality of youth.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Yoga has now been established as a science of life which promotes health, which promotes peace and tranquillity, which promotes human creativity, which promotes self-understanding; and which teaches us how to adjust with life, so that we are free from the negative influences of our environment. And this is the subject – not as a philosophical subject – but as a science of life.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Yoga does not cure anyone. It is the individual who cures himself using the practices of yoga, thus bringing about a structure of balance and harmony in the total field of personality.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

21

Stress

Stress is struggle and struggle is life. Therefore, for the individual living in the world who is continually being subjected to the wear and tear of tension, frustration and disappointment, who is living under continual pressure, yoga should bring about equilibrium and balance of mind.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Stress is a natural response to challenges in the environment. Up to a certain level, stress sharpens judgement and improves performance. However, excessive and protracted stress has at present become widespread. Excessive stress is experienced as physical, emotional and mental tension and strain. It arises when you feel unable to meet the demands and requirements placed on you from multiple sources. Underlying triggers include high or unrealistic expectations, problems with loved ones, work pressures, deadlines and work overload, financial worries and excessive mental activity. Other triggers can be crowds, traffic, noise and even welcome events such as a new job, the birth of a child or organizing a wedding.

Stress is an unavoidable part of life; however, continual stress has a negative effect on the immune response, increasing susceptibility to many diseases and illnesses, and

it slows healing. Consequently, many diseases, illnesses and ailments can be attributed to stress. Long-term stress is particularly dangerous as it eventually wears out the body by weakening the entire psychophysiological system. This can have a negative impact on your mental and emotional balance, relationships, work and social life.

Signs and symptoms of stress

- Impatience and frustration
- Insomnia
- Fatigue, chronic headaches
- Overeating or lack of appetite
- Anxiety and depression
- Stress-related disease such as high blood pressure, heart disease or cancer
- Digestive problems including excess acidity, reflux, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation or diarrhoea
- Respiratory problems and short shallow breathing, including asthma
- Low immunity to colds, flu and infection
- Muscular tension in the neck, face, back, shoulders or abdomen
- Emotional tension or instability, manifested as frequent bouts of anger or sadness
- Feeling psychologically overwhelmed by life.

A hatha yoga sadhana can help you to manage the detrimental effects of stress, to restore mental and emotional health by fostering balance, harmony and relaxation. Shatkarma induce physical purity, mental clarity and happiness thereby improving the overall health of the mind and body; asanas, pranayama and relaxation awaken and increase *prana*, the vital life energy. Together these practices remove toxins accumulated during the stress response and instead bring about a deeper connection with what it feels like to be healthy once again. This glimpse into the state of health motivates one towards pursuing the feeling of wellness over illness.

Pratyahara and concentration practices such as yoga nidra and ajapa japa help to calm the mind and remove mental dissipation. Developing greater awareness of the triggers of stress through meditation and introspection allows you to change your internal reactions and responses. By becoming the *drashta*, witness, of life and not entangled in its web, an awareness of life's inherent unity and divinity dawns. Stress is then replaced by a much greater force and understanding.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

- Shatkarma:
Jala neti, daily
Kunjal kriya, once per week
Laghoo shankhprakashana, once per month

Morning, before breakfast

- Tadasana
- Tiryak tadasana
- Kati chakrasana
- Pawanmuktasana part 1
- Abdominal and yogic breathing
- Nadi shodhana pranayama
- Bhramari pranayama
- Maha bandha

Afternoon or early evening

- Yoga nidra or yoga nap

At night before bed

- Review of the Day, 5 minutes, focusing on moments and events which were stressful, how you reacted and ways you could improve on your reaction next time. Also see the introduction, *To Live a Yogic Lifestyle* for the practice of yamas and niyamas.
- Trataka, 5 minutes
- Ajapa japa

Weekends

- SWAN meditation: once a week analyze your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, and needs. Identify the causes of stress – whether due to external circumstances or internal conflicts – and take the necessary steps to remove them from your life. Put your SWAN in a written format and review it monthly.

Lifestyle adjustments

Diet

- Eat food as prasad, a gift from Mother Earth to nourish and nurture you. Offer thanks for this gift of nourishment.
- Eat with awareness.
- Eat a diet composed mostly of fresh wholefoods: fruits, vegetables and grains. Avoid processed and artificial packaged foods.
- Limit your intake of caffeine.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and mood-altering drugs as they provide only a temporary sense of relief.
- Avoid snacking or using food for emotional fulfilment.
- Create a quiet and peaceful environment during mealtimes.

Regularity

- Be regular in your daily activities whether sleep, food, exercise, leisure or work. Be punctual with every activity. Create balance and restraint, two antidotes to stress.
- Get regular exercise, sufficient sleep and adequate rest.

Use your breath

- Develop breath awareness. Connect with your breath as often as possible during the day. Become aware of how you are breathing. Then take ten long and deep abdominal breaths.

Awareness

- Be aware of whether you are frowning, tightening your jaws or clenching your teeth, and make it a point to relax the face every hour.

- Smile with or without reason to yourself or others.
- Be aware of your daily activities: while you are driving, sitting, talking, cooking. Awareness reduces the stress associated with that activity and brings in grace and efficiency.

Complementary practices from raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Raja yoga

- Digital fasting, or not using electronic devices, daily before sleep and on Sundays.

Karma yoga

Practise the yamas and niyamas of karma yoga:

- Do your best with skill and full awareness
- Act without expectations of results in any form
- Remain balanced
- See yourself not as a doer, with interests and self-centred motivation; instead see yourself as an instrument willing and ready to be played.

Bhakti yoga

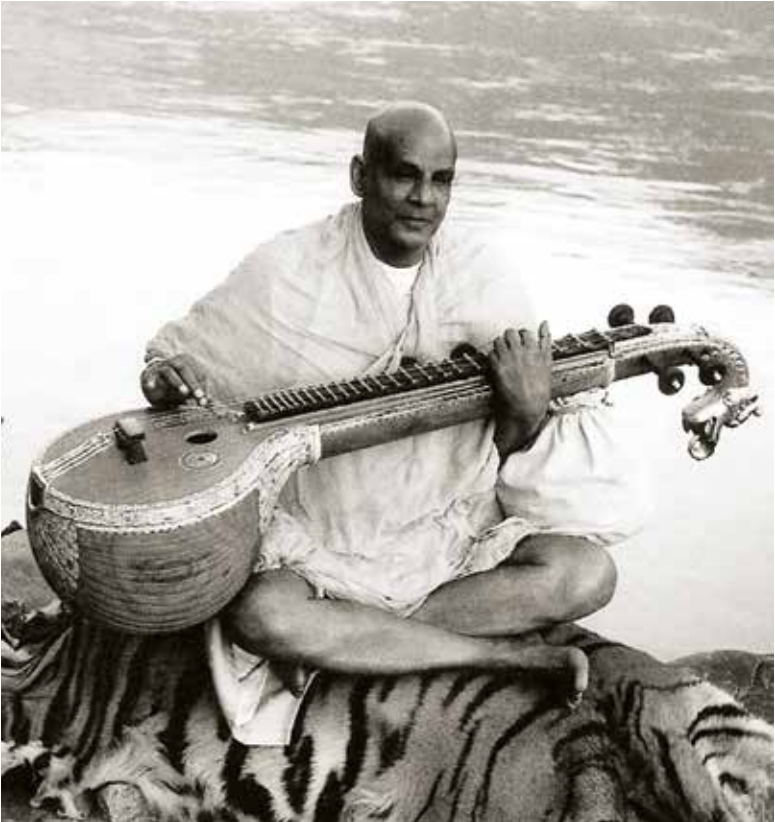
- Sing kirtan and listen to soothing, calming music.
- Engage in an activity which is free of any self-interest, or selfish motivation. Give of your time, energy, skill and care freely to someone or to some project dedicated to the upliftment of others.
- Engage in one activity daily that helps you connect with nature; it could be in the form of tree pooja, or watching the sunrise or sunset.

Jnana yoga

Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:

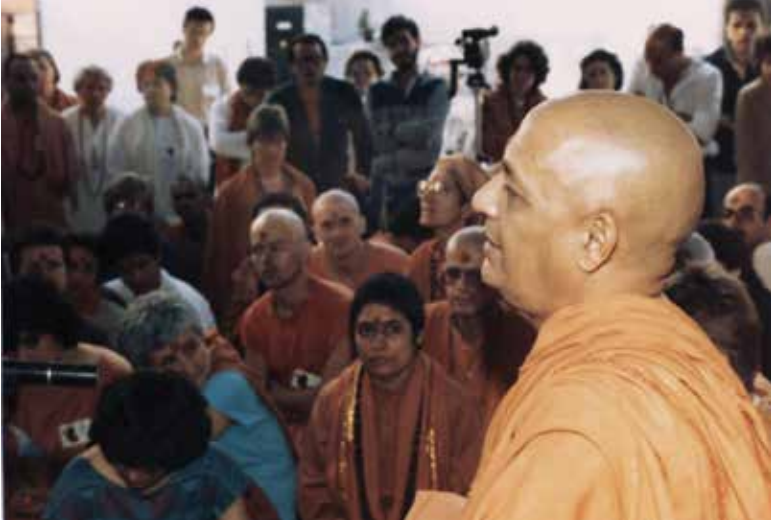
1. How many times was I aware of being stressed?
2. What did I do to remain calm and composed?
3. What attitude, habit, personality trait stressed me?

4. What was the stress factor in my external environment?
5. Which quality do I need to develop to be more relaxed?



There is chaos and disturbance on the surface only. Dive deep into the centre by withdrawing yourself from the sensual objects and look within; you will enjoy perfect inward stillness and supreme peace. Nothing can upset your poise or equanimity now. Rishis of yore lived always in this centre and were happy and joyful despite various external disturbing conditions. Nothing could shake their mental balance.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

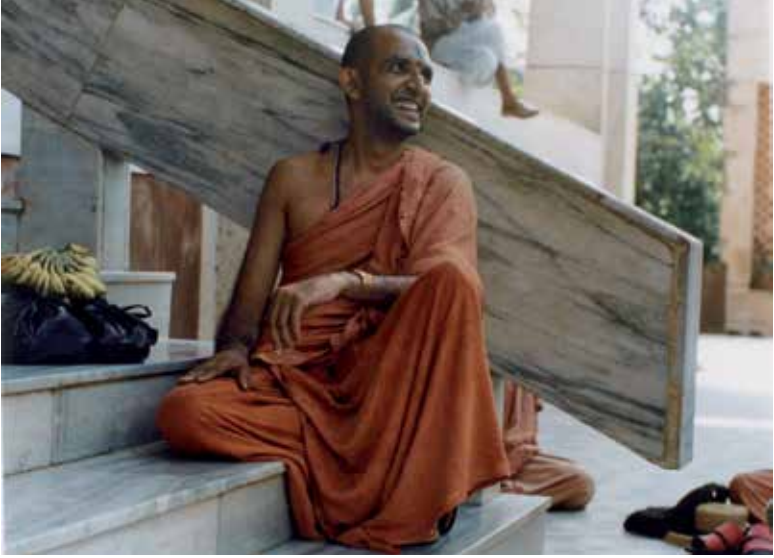


Relaxation is an art, for there are various practices which one can develop and utilize to bring about relaxation of the mind and body, transforming life into an expression of wellbeing. Relaxation is also a science, for it is based on solid scientific fact.

Relaxation sounds easy – one merely closes the eyes and sleeps. But, in fact, for most people relaxation, deep relaxation, is very difficult. While resting, their minds are in a state of turmoil and their bodies are continually tossing and turning, and the muscles twitching. The biggest obstacle to overcome is for people to actually take active steps to bring about relaxation, to develop and use the various techniques that are available. Because most people cannot relax, in the real sense of the word, they will find that their whole lives will change by just being able to relax. It is such a simple thing, but it can bring wonderful results.

Shavasana is an easy and useful method of giving peace to the body and mind. It is a unique method of complete relaxation, and also an aid to sensory withdrawal.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Without stress, we would not be able to survive and function in the world. In reality stress is like adding a pinch of salt to food to give it taste. When stress becomes unmanageable, it becomes distress, so rather than stress management, it is managing distress that is the problem. Stress is not negative; it is an important component of our existence. Even cavemen had stress, hunting wild animals and not knowing what calamities would befall them. Stress took birth with life and that is the reality.

How can yoga manage physiological, psychological, professional and environmental stress? Stress disturbs the whole personality, body, mind and emotions, and causes imbalances, illnesses and diseases. Yoga has always believed that it is possible to deal with stress through practice and effort to acquire personal peace and harmony. People who have adopted the wide variety of practices available in yoga have experienced the wonders they can work if practised in the right manner.

If the practices of asana, pranayama, relaxation, yoga nidra and the two practices of concentration, trataka and

ajapa japa, are incorporated into one's routine, the ability to manage each and every kind of stress in the world is possible. The ability to maintain health in the most adverse conditions can be developed. The strength to experience one's inner power in the most demanding situations the world can throw at you will arise.

If the entire body and emotions feel affected by stressful conditions, some simple postures, pranayamas and relaxation should be practised. Postures such as *tadasana*, the palm tree pose, *tiryak tadasana*, the swaying palm tree pose, *kati chakrasana*, the waist rotating pose, and *pawanmuktasana*, the energy releasing poses, are recommended. Pranayamas such as *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing, and *bhramari*, the humming bee breath, and then some *yoga nidra*, relaxation, should also be done.

Bandhas are locks and there are three areas of the body which get blocked or locked when under stress or tension. Many people notice that when they are under pressure the stomach becomes tight, or the perineum becomes tight, or the neck becomes tight. Tension headaches can result from tightening of the neck muscles.

This is unconscious tensing, while *bandhas* are conscious tensing. Unconscious tensing creates stress and conscious tensing releases stress, as the process and movement are being controlled. This means tension is not being created, it is being controlled and guided.

If *trataka* is practised at night before going to bed, when one lies down the mind is absolutely quiet, there is no *vikshepa* of mind, there is no confusion or movement of mind. *Trataka* is a most effective technique to focus the mind, clearing it of confusion, conflict, stress and tension. Along with practising *trataka*, a regulated lifestyle is a must. Irregular sleep and waking times, dietary indiscretions, high stress levels, indulgence in sensory pleasures and an unbalanced attitude towards life, all put off the desired effects.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

22

High Blood Pressure

When the heart pumps blood through the arteries, the blood presses against the walls of the blood vessels. In people who suffer from hypertension, this pressure is abnormally high. When blood pressure is elevated, the heart must work harder to pump an adequate amount of blood to all the tissues of the body. Ultimately, due to overwork of the heart, the condition often leads to kidney failure, heart failure or stroke. In addition, high blood pressure is often associated with arteriosclerosis, obesity, diabetes, hyperthyroidism and adrenal tumours. Because high blood pressure usually causes no symptoms until complications develop, it is known as the 'silent killer'. The causes of high blood pressure are not altogether clear, however it is strongly correlated with mental stress and a highly tense personality. Due to the psychosomatic nature of the condition, research has found that yoga is particularly effective in helping to manage and eliminate high blood pressure.

For the person suffering from high blood pressure yoga can, first and foremost, help them to learn to relax. Through the tranquillizing practices of yoga, inner tensions can be calmed and quietened. With care, attention and application, high blood pressure can be eradicated with yoga.

Signs and symptoms

High blood pressure can exist for a long time without any symptoms. When the levels of blood pressure are very high it can cause dizziness, strong headaches, ringing in the ears, nausea, tiredness.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

Morning, before breakfast

- Tadasana
- Tiryak tadasana
- Kati chakrasana
- Pawanmuktasana part 1
- Makarasana
- Eka pada pranamasana
- Matsyakridasana
- Shavasana
- Abdominal breathing
- Nadi shodhana pranayama
- Bhramari pranayama
- Ujjayi pranayama with the mantra *So Ham*
- Hridaya mudra

Afternoon or evening

- Yoga nidra, or if not much time available a yoga nap

At night before bed

- Bhramari
- Ajapa japa with hridaya mudra

Lifestyle adjustments

Practise the lifestyle adjustments recommended for stress management (see Chapter 19). In addition:

- Synchronize with nature's cycles by waking early and going to bed early.
- Get regular light to moderate exercise in a non-competitive environment.

- Rest in maximum doses using yogic techniques to induce relaxation.
- Accept yourself and your feelings.
- Cultivate awareness of the present moment, free from cares and worries of the past and future.
- Find happiness and contentment within yourself, not in external sources.

Complementary practices from raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Raja yoga

- Digital fasting daily before sleep and on Sundays
- Visualization of nature images
- Visualize yourself happy and stress-free

Karma yoga

- Develop the ability to act with the attitude of being an instrument and not of being the doer
- Develop awareness in the present moment, avoid focusing on expectations, results and rewards

Bhakti yoga

- Practise one mala of *Om* chanting, kirtan
- Read inspiring stories

Jnana yoga

Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:

1. Was I regular in my yoga practices to manage blood pressure?
2. How many hours of the day was I happy and stress-free, and how many hours unhappy and tense?
3. What did I do to reduce the unhappy state and to increase happiness?
4. Did I create a balance in my day by incorporating various kinds of activities or was I fixated on only one activity?
5. Was there balance between rest and activity?



The mind is intimately connected with the body. The mind acts upon the body and the body reacts upon the mind. The mind influences the body – a pure, healthy mind means a healthy body. Grief in the mind weakens the body. The body influences the mind in its turn. If the body is strong and healthy, the mind also becomes healthy and strong.

If the body is sick, the mind also becomes sick. A pain in the stomach causes depression in the mind. The primary cause of diseases which afflict the body is bad thoughts. Whatever is held in the mind will be produced in the physical body. Any ill-feeling or bitterness towards another person at once affects the body and produces some kind of disease in the body. Intense passion, hatred, long-standing bitter jealousy, corroding anxiety, fits of hot temper actually destroy the cells of the body and induce disease of the heart, liver, kidneys, spleen and stomach.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



For high blood pressure and cardiovascular complications, practise bhramari, the humming bee breath, sheetali, sheetkari and ujjayi.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Bhramari pranayama has a deeply soothing effect on the nerves, especially for people who are physically and mentally in a rush. It has been found that bhramari stimulates alpha brainwaves. This effect is felt even more intensely when one comes home from work. After three or four rounds of bhramari a state of deep relaxation, awareness and alertness is felt. The sound vibrations emitted during bhramari, in conjunction with concentration in the centre of the head where the sound is being felt, help tranquillize and relax the agitated state of the brain by inducing alpha brainwaves. Bhramari is an effective technique to reduce hypertension.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

23

Excess Mucus, Bile and Wind

The yogis understood that any type of blockage or excess in the body creates conditions of ill-health. Just as a stagnant river breeds mosquitoes and disease, while a running river is healthy and vital, the humours in the inner workings of the physical body must flow freely without obstruction. In the view of yoga and the science of ayurveda, there are three humours, *dosha*, in the body that, when in excess, create conditions for disease. These are mucus, bile and wind. Most people have some kind of dosha imbalance.

The practices of pawanmuktasana parts 1, 2 and 3 are used to rebalance mucus, bile and wind. Regular sadhana tones the inner digestive organs, strengthens the muscles of the abdomen and spine, creates flexibility in the body and balances the doshas. The shatkarma are a particularly effective way to balance *kapha*, *pitta* and *vata*, mucus, bile and wind.

Signs and symptoms

Excess of mucus or *kapha*:

- Respiratory disorders and difficulty breathing
- Colds and flu
- Asthma
- Blocked nostrils and sinusitis.

Excess of bile or *pitta*:

- Acidity

- Heartburn
- Diarrhoea
- Reflux

Excess of wind or *vata*:

- Constipation
- Pain in the body
- Flatulence
- Stiffness in muscles and joints

HATHA YOGA SADHANA

- Shatkarma:
Jala neti, daily
Agnisara kriya, daily
Kunjal kriya, once per week
Laghoo shankhprakashana, once per month

Morning, before breakfast

- Pawanmuktasana part 2
- Shaktibandhas (pawanmuktasana part 3)
- Nadi shodhana (1:1) for 5 minutes, to a comfortable count
- Bhramari x 11
- Ujjayi pranayama as often as possible

Afternoon or evening

- Yoga nidra

At night before bed

- Ajapa japa, with awareness moving from navel to throat
- Mantra japa
- *Om* chanting a loud

Lifestyle adjustments

- Care for your digestive system, which is at the root of good health; have meals at regular times with no snacking in between.

- Consume your meals between sunrise and sunset. After sunrise, take breakfast; before midday take lunch and before sunset take dinner. After sunset, the digestive system is sluggish, leading to problems of indigestion and associated conditions.
- Be discriminative; don't indulge in what aggravates your dosha.
- Get regular exercise, especially in the fresh open air.
- Drink plenty of water. When waking, start the day with drinking a glass of warm water.
- Ensure at least a three-hour gap between the evening meal and sleep to allow for the digestive process to work effectively.
- Regularity, balance and restraint are the keys to health.
- The yama of *kshama*, forgiveness, is important to let go of grudges and resentment; *indriya nigraha*, sensory restraint, helps to control cravings for food.

Complementary practices from karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Karma yoga

- Develop awareness in your interactions with others, your activities and speech

Bhakti yoga

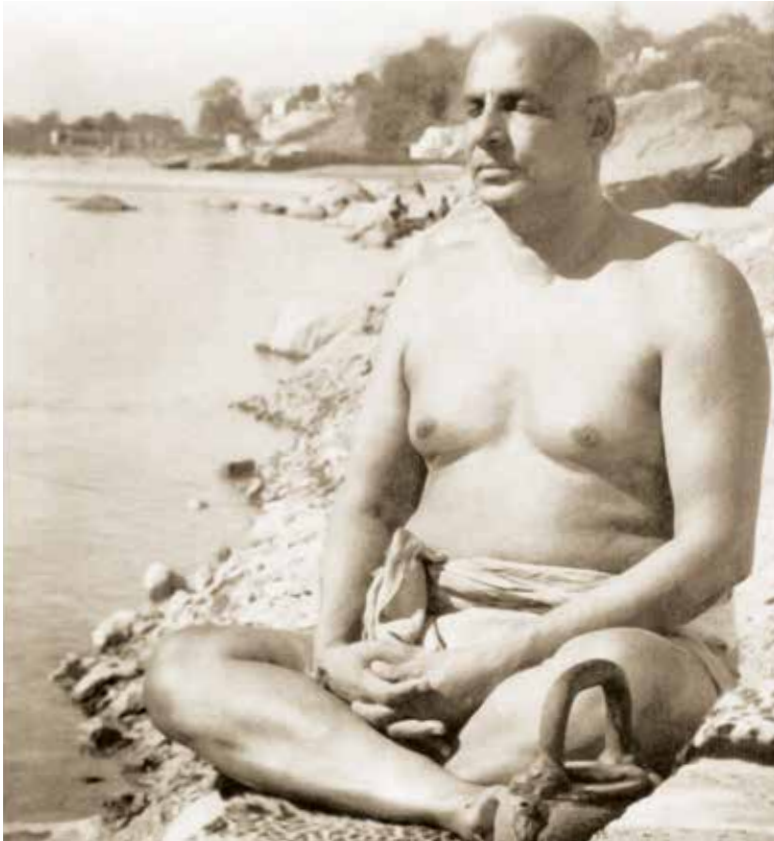
- Sing kirtan with family or a group of friends
- Do *Om* chanting
- Develop contentment

Jnana yoga

Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:

1. How many times was I aware of any imbalance in the three doshas?
2. What were the reasons for the imbalance? Lifestyle, diet, stress, environment?
3. What did I do to manage the signs and symptoms of the imbalance?

4. What changes do I have to make to prevent further imbalance?
5. What attitude or quality do I need to cultivate?



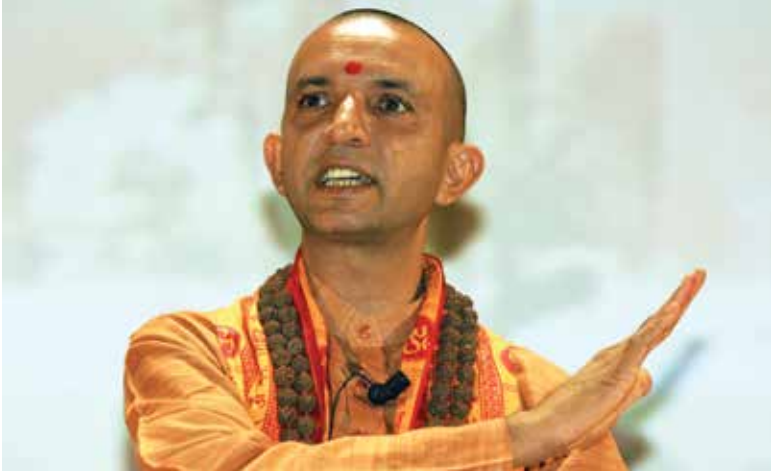
Physical health is an important condition of mental health. Strain of any organ, excessive fatigue and mental strain should be avoided. One's life must be well-regulated and disciplined. *Sanyam*, restraint, must be practised in all things. Excess of any kind should be avoided. Stick to the happy, golden medium.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



The human body functions along simple lines. Just as a machine produces wastes, the physical body continuously produces wastes. These wastes are of three types: mucus, gas and acidity. If the body is internally cleansed from time to time, the excess of these three metabolic products is removed, and their formation is regulated and balanced. Perfect health can then be maintained.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The practices of pawanmuktasana create a balance in the *doshas*, the humours, in the body. Pawanmuktasana part 1 primarily rectifies the imbalance of *vata*, wind; pawanmuktasana part 2 that of *pitta*, bile; and pawanmuktasana part 3 that of *kapha*, mucus.

Pawanmuktasana part 2 specifically deals with the functioning, maintenance and health of the digestive system as a whole. Digestion is such a beautiful and complex system which no scientist can ever create. The strength, the stamina and the energy to survive is received through nourishment, extracted by the digestive fires from the food that you eat, and the waste matter is put out. What a unique system! Each organ works independently and has a specific role to support life, yet the failure of any organ will lead to distress and eventually death.

The movements of pawanmuktasana part 2 ensure that muscle strength and health of the internal organs of the digestive system is maintained. Once that happens, there is better functioning of the digestive system including the secretion of the digestive fluids and hormones of the endocrine glands.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

24

Anxiety and Obsessions

The feeling of anxiety is a natural and common human experience caused by fear. Instead of viewing the future with hope, you imagine possible misfortunes. For most, this feeling is manageable and passes quickly. For some, however, anxiety can become an acute or chronic problem. Acute anxiety disorder manifests itself as panic attacks. In a panic attack, the body's natural 'fight or flight' reaction occurs at the wrong time. This is an abrupt and intense physiological response where the body prepares itself to deal with an emergency situation; there is increased production of adrenaline, muscles become tense, and heartbeat and breathing become more rapid. These sensations can be distressing or frightening to the person experiencing them and increase the feeling of anxiety.

Chronic anxiety is a milder and more general form of anxiety. Here the person feels a vague sense of anxiety much of the time but it does not reach the level of intensity experienced in a panic attack. The person may feel continuously uneasy, especially around other people. Headaches and chronic fatigue often accompany this form of anxiety. Chronic anxiety can begin at any age but onset typically occurs in the person's twenties or thirties.

When anxiety becomes intense and it becomes a habitual response to circumstances and interactions, it greatly detracts from the sufferer's quality of life, affecting health,

vitality, happiness and wellbeing. Anxiety disorders can be caused by genes, food allergies, drugs, illness, trauma, heart abnormality or stress. Health professionals generally agree that conflict, whether internal or interpersonal, promotes a state of anxiety.

In the face of crippling anxiety, obsessions often appear as a way to numb the distress or to gain a feeling of control over one's life. Anything that initially distracts the mind from the anxiety, fear and insecurity and at the same time attracts the mind can become the object of one's infatuation – chocolate, hygiene, television shows or dramas, internet surfing or one's self-image in the form of body, clothing and make-up. These obsessions then lead to their own set of consequences: obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, or self-obsession creating imbalances in one's relationship to the external world and loss of self-awareness.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety and obsessions

- Insomnia
- Overeating or lack of appetite
- Digestive problems such as irritable bowel syndrome, constipation or diarrhoea
- Short shallow breathing and respiratory problems, including asthma
- Depressive, agitated or fluctuating moods
- Claustrophobic sensation
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Fear and unhappiness
- Feelings of shame, guilt, grief or loneliness
- Low self-confidence
- Difficulty concentrating
- Procrastination.

A hatha yoga sadhana can help to reduce anxiety and obsessions, release stored tensions and knots, develop a feeling of grounding and serenity, and balance the nervous system.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – GENERAL

- Shatkarma
Jala neti, daily
Kunjla kriya, 1 to 3 times per week

Morning, before breakfast

- Shashankasana
- Saithalyasana
- Vyaghrasana or marjari asana
- Bhujangasana
- Shalabhasana
- Abdominal breathing
- Nadi shodhana pranayama
- Bhramari pranayama
- Ujjayi pranayama
- Moola bandha

Afternoon or evening

- Yoga nidra or yoga nap
- Review of the Day
- SWAN meditation, daily or weekly, to analyze your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Identify the causes of anxiety, whether due to external circumstances or internal conflicts. Identify your obsessions and their causes. Identify and take the necessary steps to remove anxiety and obsessions from your life. Put your SWAN in a written format and review it monthly.

At night before bed

- Bhramari
- Trataka
- *Om* chanting aloud or japa on guru mantra

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – IN THE MIDST OF AN ANXIETY ATTACK

Practise abdominal breath awareness with *kumbhaka*, retention. Inhale slowly to a count of four, hold the breath in for four, exhale slowly to a count of four and hold the breath out for a count of four. Continue until you feel calmer and the anxiety subsides. Know that the attack will pass.

Lifestyle adjustments

- Practise digital fasting daily or one day a week.
- Regular exercise: walking, cycling, swimming, jogging or something else that you like.
- Spend time in an activity that connects you with others, such as helping in an old age home, with children, community service.
- Connect with nature.
- Add a relaxing activity to your daily routine: painting, gardening, stitching.
- Develop breath awareness during the day.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and wholegrains.
- Avoid consuming coffee, tea, chocolate and other foods containing caffeine.
- Limit your exposure to radio, television and internet to reduce distressing external information.

Complementary practices from raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Raja yoga

- Practise pratipaksha bhavana: when negative and anxious states of mind arise, mentally focus on opposite qualities such as courage, boldness, inner security, energy, strength and love.

Karma yoga

- Develop 'skill in action' in a relaxed manner without becoming an obsessive perfectionist

Bhakti yoga

- Sing kirtan and listen to calming, soothing music
- Do likhit japa
- Make an effort to relate to people in need. Give practical assistance, encouragement, sympathy and affection. Swami Satyananda Saraswati says, "You can secure happiness if you contribute to the happiness of others."

Jnana yoga

Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:

1. How many times was I anxious?
2. What were the reasons for my anxiety?
3. How many times did I make an effort to reduce and manage my anxiety?
4. How many times did I smile?
5. How many times did I remember to consciously relax myself?





If you want to overcome fear, mentally deny that you have fear and concentrate your attention upon the opposite quality, the ideal of courage. When this is developed, fear vanishes by itself. The positive always overcomes the negative. This is an infallible law of nature.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

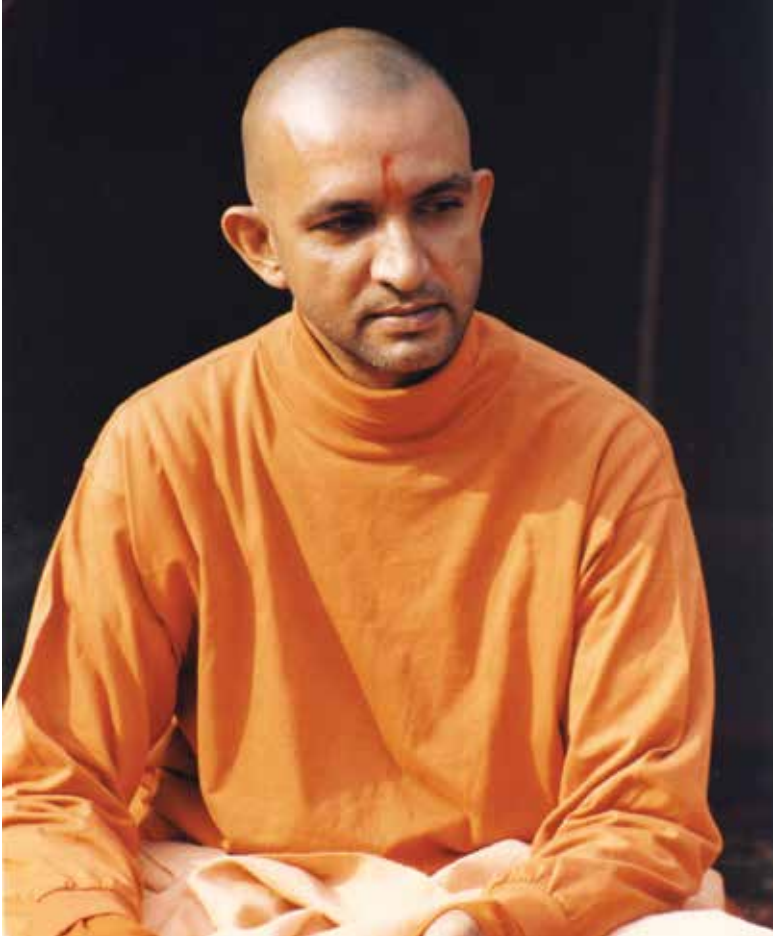


There are levels of anxiety. Simple anxiety is felt by everybody – “I have to do this and run to do that and at 8:30 I have to go there.” This is normal anxiety. It is necessary to have this kind of anxiety in order to have proper control of the mind.

Imbalance in the hormones is another cause of anxiety. The problem of hormonal imbalance can first be tackled with hatha yoga, then by working out one’s feelings. Practise antar mouna: in antar mouna, whatever comes into the mind, let it come!

In certain types of anxiety, *kumbhaka*, retention of breath, is very good but not everybody can practise retention. Kumbhaka can only be used after yoga has been practised for some time.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Anxiety and tension or stress can be experienced on various levels at the same time. The four areas where anxiety and stress are usually experienced are muscular, nervous, cerebral and emotional. Initially the level on which the anxiety is being experienced needs to be identified. The approach will depend on which it is. If one feels anxiety on all levels, a different approach is required.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

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Insomnia

Insomnia is habitual sleeplessness, repeated night after night. It is caused by the inability to let go of the mental whirlpool of the day's thoughts and emotions. The evening activities of modern life, enabled by electrical lighting, also disrupt our circadian rhythms which are based on melatonin secretion during the hours of darkness. Those experiencing insomnia typically lie awake at night ruminating over their cares and worries, but also exhilaration, excitement, stimulation and desire can cause sleeplessness. Desperately trying to go to sleep, the unrest of insomnia sufferers is compounded by worrying about how they will feel in the morning. The resulting mental agitation manifests as physical tension, tossing and turning, and general restlessness.

Some people suffering from insomnia are unable to fall asleep when first going to bed; others wake up during the night and find themselves unable to go back to sleep. Some experience both patterns of sleeplessness. Although insomnia is not dangerous, it is frustrating and the lethargy experienced during the day can interfere with daily activities, prompting the person to seek treatment and relief. Prolonged sleep deprivation causes deterioration in overall performance and can even result in mild personality changes.

Every individual has a different requirement of sleep, however, most adults function at their best on eight hours of sleep per night. Yogis living in an ashram may function on six

or seven hours, while a child might require up to ten hours of sleep at night. It is not uncommon for those over the age of sixty to require less sleep.

A regular yoga sadhana induces relaxation of body, mind and spirit thereby promoting the ability to sleep soundly at night and to wake up feeling refreshed.

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – TO MANAGE AND PREVENT INSOMNIA

Morning, before breakfast

- Tadasana
- Tiryak tadasana
- Kati chakrasana
- Surya namaskara
- Sheetali or sheetkari pranayama
- Ujjayi pranayama with the mantra *Om*
- Bhramari pranayama

At night before bed

- Trataka
- Bhramari pranayama

HATHA YOGA SADHANA – AT NIGHT WHEN EXPERIENCING SLEEPLESSNESS

- Awareness of abdominal breath
- Counting the breath backwards from 100 to 1
- Japa of mantra *Om*
- Yoga nidra

Lifestyle adjustments

Overcoming insomnia and getting a good night's sleep involve establishing a set of supportive daily habits, including:

- Go to bed only when you are sleepy. Avoid sleeping during the day.

- Establish a regular bedtime routine for going to bed and waking up.
- Observe mouna for at least one hour before bed.
- Do not undertake any activity that excites the nervous system.
- Turn off all electronic devices two hours before sleep; avoid television.
- A shower helps clear not only the physical but also the pranic grime you collect during the day.
- Do not stay in bed if you are not sleepy. Get up, go to another room and read, practise mantra or do something quietly until you are sleepy.
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping, not for reading, watching television, working or eating.
- Exercise regularly in the morning, afternoon or early evening, but not just before bedtime. Regular exercise promotes a restful sleep.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, as well as coffee, tea, chocolate and other foods containing caffeine.

Complementary practices from raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga

Raja yoga

- Disconnect from the thinking, analyzing aspect of the mind, *manas*, and connect with the expansiveness of the greater mind, *mahat*.
- Visualize each thought as a stone that you throw away.

Karma yoga

- See yourself not as a doer, with interests and self-centred motivation; instead see yourself as an instrument willing and ready to be played.

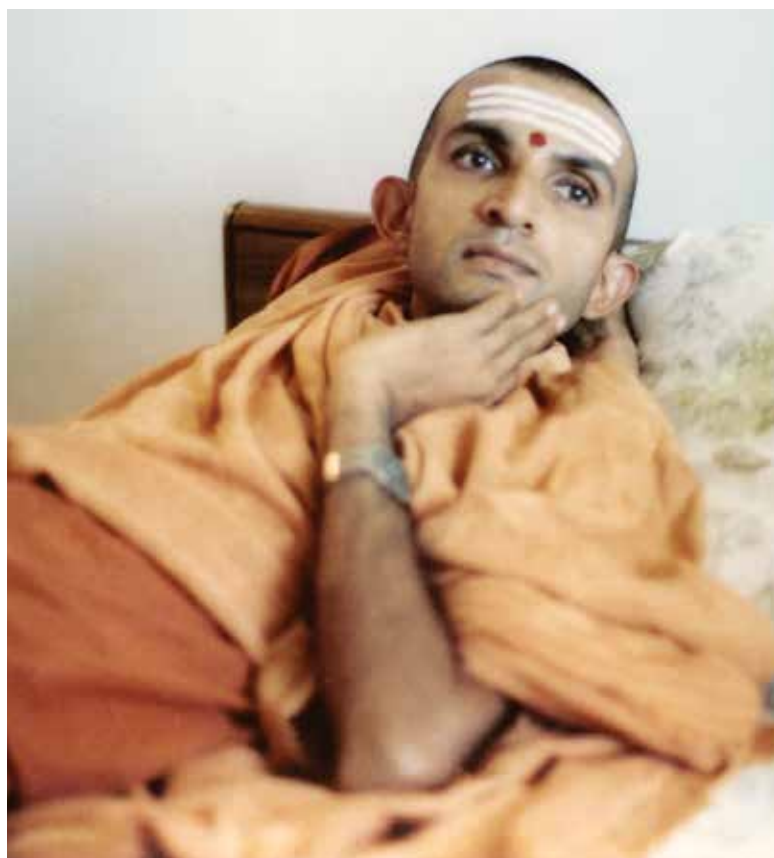
Bhakti yoga

- Kirtan
- *Om* chanting aloud
- Develop contentment, acceptance and happiness

Jnana yoga

Review of the Day is helpful to clear the events of the day, not to carry anything into the night and cogitate obsessively, but to clean the slate of the day's events. Suggested questions to use for your daily/weekly spiritual diary:

1. How many times did I have to face sleeplessness?
2. What was the cause of my sleeplessness?
3. What were the last activities before going to sleep?
4. How many hours before going to sleep did I disconnect from digital devices?
5. What do I need to develop to overcome insomnia?





Regularity and punctuality go hand in hand. No one can reasonably expect success in life without these qualifications. See how regular nature is. Be regular in your daily habits, work and sadhana. Get up and go to bed at a particular time. Be punctual in taking your meals, in your studies, in your exercises and meditation, and you will have a very happy life. You will be free from worry, anxiety, haphazard and shabby work. You will do the right thing at the right moment.

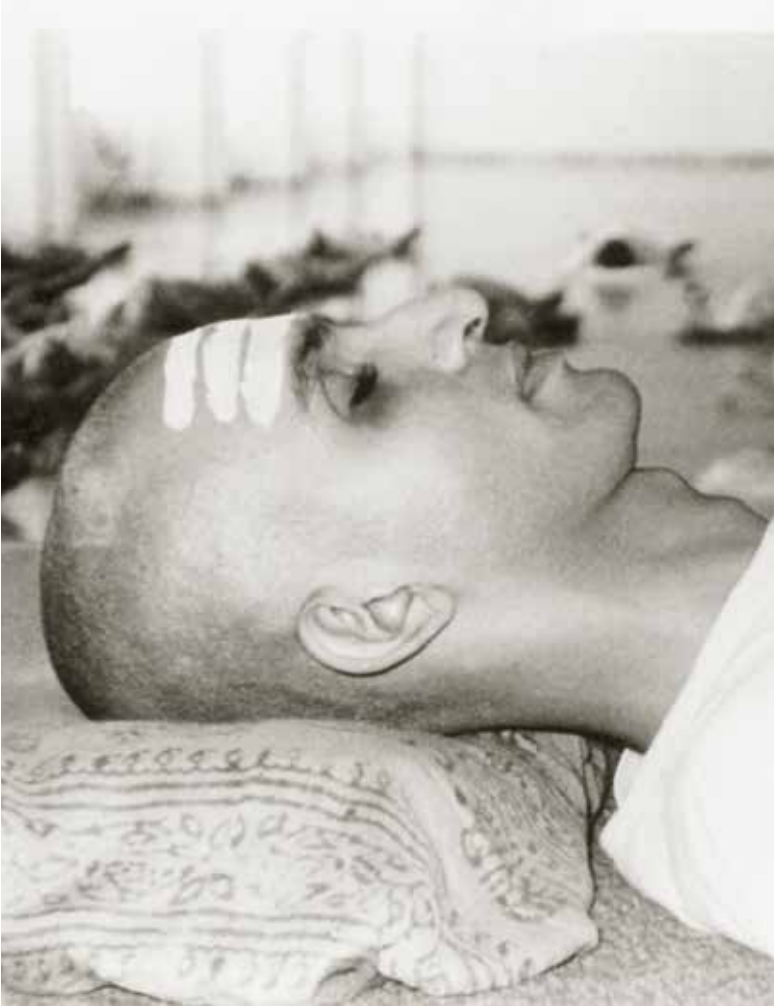
—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



The practice of ujjayi pranayama with the mantra *Om*, although it is so simple, has subtle influences on the whole body as well as the psychic plane. It calms the nervous system and removes all worries and troubles from the mind. People who suffer from insomnia should have a quiet, deep sleep if they practise this technique in bed at night. They should lie in shavasana without any pillow. When the head is elevated by a pillow, it obstructs the breath from passing through the already contracted glottis. This practice is also useful for people with high blood pressure as it reduces the heartbeat.

For insomnia, first practise *trataka*, then *yoga nidra*. These practices will relieve insomnia, but there is something else one has to do. Why does one have insomnia? Because one thinks and thinks and thinks.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



There are two reasons for the inability to sleep – one reason is worry and the second reason is desire. If you have a desire or a worry you will be unable to sleep. If you do yoga nidra before sleeping you can free yourself from worry and the mind will attain the state of sleep.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

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SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

Following its Golden Jubilee in 2013, which celebrated the conclusion of 50 years of yoga propagation, Bihar School of Yoga embarked upon the '2nd Chapter of Yoga'. In this next level of learning, yoga is to be experienced and lived as a sadhana and lifestyle.

The series of *Yoga for Everyone* offers an overview of various branches of yoga, and includes practice capsules for different groups and conditions.

Hatha Yoga for Everyone: Overview and Practice Capsules describes the many facets of hatha yoga, including the aims, benefits, obstacles and lifestyle adjustments. Students, adults, families, the elderly, sportspeople and others will find practical guidelines for their wellbeing in day-to-day life, and for conditions such as stress, anxiety and insomnia.



ISBN :978-81-938918-8-9